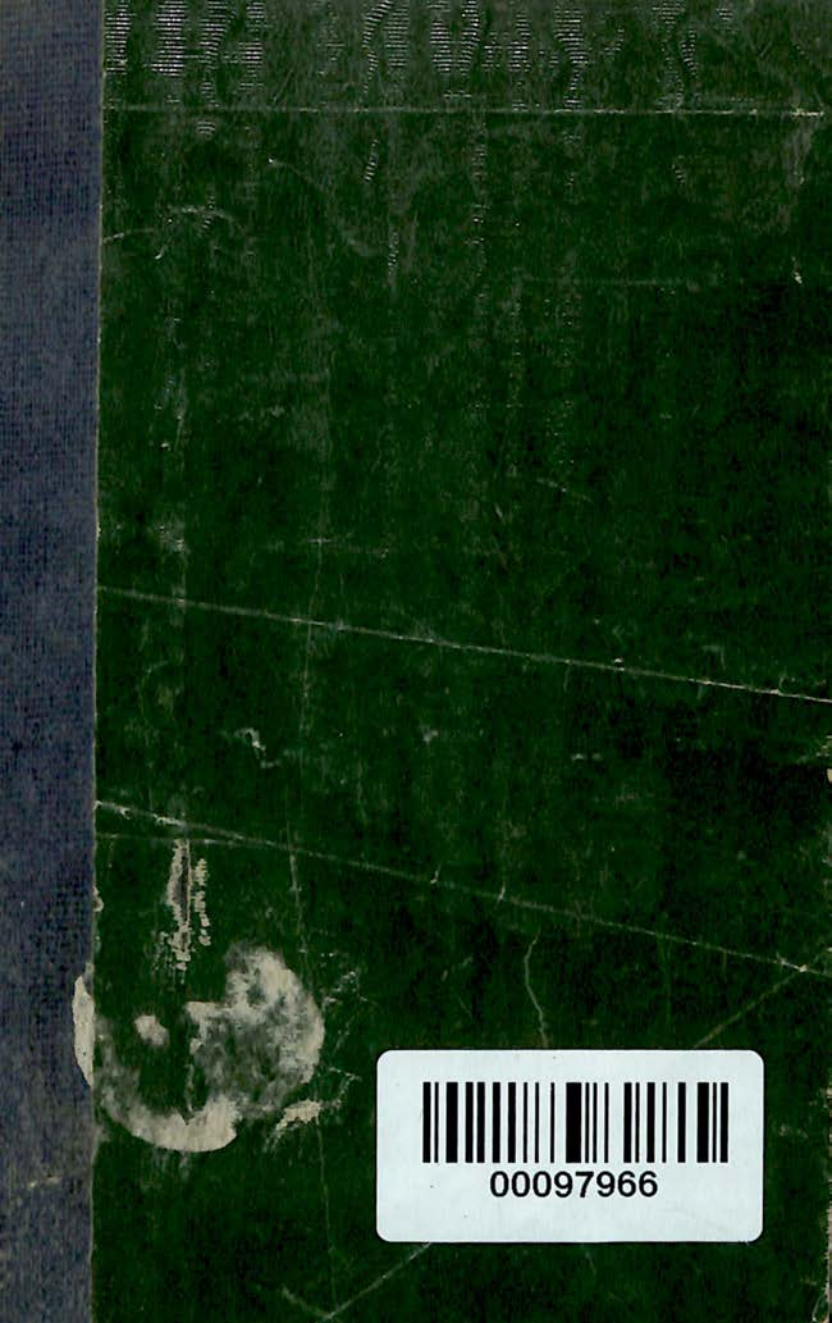
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SKETCHES AND ESSAYS

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FROM THE

SATURDAY REVIEW

7966

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MDCCCLXXIII

00097966

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SKETCHES AND ESSAYS.

ADVENTURE SCHOOLS.

We may take for granted that most people are aware that an Elementary Education Act was passed at the end of the Session of 1870. This Act specially provided for the formation of a School Board in the metropolis, which, among its other duties, "should proceed at once to supply their district with sufficient school accommodation." It consequently devolved upon the London School Board, shortly after its construction, to ascertain the number of elementary schools existing in each division of the metropolis, and so to discover whether or not there was a sufficient amount of accommodation al-

ready provided for the children in the district. In order to facilitate this inquiry, the Education Department drew up certain forms, to be filled up by the principal teacher of every school, and supplied them to the School Board. The officers of the Board entered at once upon their duties, and in compliance with the requirements of the Act, special returns of 3151 existing or projected schools within the ten divisions of the metropolis, where the ordinary fee did not exceed 9d. a week, and at which elementary education was the principal part of the education given, were forwarded in April to the Education Department. The inquiry into the suitability and sufficiency of these schools was undertaken by the Board, the inquiry into their efficiency by the Education Department. By the 71st section of the Act the Department was empowered to appoint any persons to act as inspectors of returns, "who shall proceed to inquire into the accuracy and completeness of any one or more returns made in pursuance of the Act, and into the efficiency and suitability of any school mentioned in such return, and to inspect and examine the scholars in every such school." The

Act also declared that, if any teacher refused or neglected to fill up the form required for the said return, or refused to allow the inspector to inspect the school-house or examine any scholar, "such school shall not be taken into consideration among the schools giving efficient elementary education to the district." Of this power the Education Department availed itself, and appointed between sixty and seventy inspectors of returns, who entered on their duties in the course of May 1871. The schools from which returns were received were broadly divided into three classes—public schools, where the premises were secured by deed, with managers acting under that deed, who appointed and controlled the teacher; private schools, governed by private managers or by a committee not acting under any deed; and, lastly, adventure schools, of which the number was nearly two thousand, where the teacher gained a livelihood by his or her vocation. It is with reference to this last class, as they exist in London, that we intend to make some remarks.

A large proportion of them consists of dames' schools. The word "dame" in this case does

not signify a baronet's wife, or a man in charge of forty boys at Eton, but a middle-aged woman, not unfrequently the possessor of a beard, and suggestive of the fairy who is not invited to the traditional christening, and arrives to spread dismay in the middle of the ceremony. The quietude of this ancient race has been sadly disturbed during the present year. Rumours of startling innovations reached their ears, and hints of a general inquiry into their schools alarmed them. Bitter complaints of such unwarrantable interference made themselves heard. Where indeed might not the province of Government be expected to extend if old women could not be left in the peaceable charge of many varieties of infant life during five hours of the day? The evil hour came at last, and the sanctity of the parlour and the repose of the kitchen were invaded. The first indication of trouble was a visit from the School Board official, who asked a quantity of minute questions which evidently did not bear upon the subject. Why should an old lady be asked to fill up a sheet of paper almost exceeding the size of her school with a host of irrelevant particulars?

Was the room in which the education of her scholars was carried on exclusively appropriated to education? With the exception of a little cooking and eating and washing and sleeping, it undoubtedly was so appropriated; circumstances, however, which obliged her to enter "not strictly" as an answer to this interrogation. What was the size of her room? How should she know? It probably answered to the definition of a point, having no magnitude, but position only. At any rate she felt certain that there was plenty of air, for she had room for more scholars. What was her tenancy? Probably monthly, possibly weekly, certainly precarious. What was her age? An impertinent question, as one old lady wrote in reply. Then—hardest task of all—she was expected to write her own name at the end of this inquisitorial document, and also that of the month, which, being February, proved often the most terrible undertaking of all. When these particulars had at last been given, her young ladies disturbed, their nerves unhinged, and herself put out, was she, instead of being left in peace, to undergo another examination from another

official three months afterwards, whose language was still more unintelligible and confused, and whose proceedings were wholly incompatible with living in a free country? Was it indeed a free country? The dame, however, has had some circumstances in her favour. It is one thing to look for her and another to find her. Extraordinary difficulties attend the discovery of her lurking-place, even though the Argonaut sallies forth in a hansom-cab furnished with gigantic maps. There are streets in which objections seem to exist against any number above 8, and where the inhabitants may with great truth be described as living at sixes and sevens. Sometimes there are five numbers marked 4 within a hundred yards. There is nothing to be done except patiently inquire on all sides. Mrs Smith, the object of your search, is unknown, though the name suggests recollections to the neighbours, who propound different theories to account for her disappearance. The greatest interest is felt, the excitement is intense, traffic and business are suspended, and Mrs Smith, could she be found, would be the heroine of the moment. The butcher is sure to

know, and the crowd surges hurriedly to his shop. Unfortunately, his knowledge does not go beyond the impression that a lady of that name did live in the street; nor has his neighbour the grocer any clearer view upon the subject. In the mean time the cabman, who is far beyond the radius of four miles from Charing Cross, and consequently as helpless as a fish out of water, is holding a separate court of his own, attended by many children and mothers, the latter engaged in the duties of maternity, but all actuated by a not unreasonable desire to know why Mrs Smith is "wanted." "That's a good boy," shouts one to the bewildered official, whom she very probably mistakes for an attorney, "and if it's a legacy, you'll give me some." If it is, the official promises he will. Nothing can be kinder or more genial than the general disposition to give information; nothing can be more useless than the information when given. At last a girl, whose body emerges in a most dangerous manner from a top garret, gives a clue; there are, of course, six streets, places, and courts of the same name in the immediate neighbourhood, each sub-

divided into as many terraces. It is round the corner at No. 9; but 9 is now 84, and Mrs Smith moved six weeks ago. There are no names affixed to the corners of the streets; the map is of no assistance, for when it was made the whole of the district was an open field. The cabman is reduced to a state of simple imbecility, though he considers it his duty to his horse and to himself to murmur at intervals that he never was in the place before. Mrs Smith turns out to be the new tenant of 4, Paradise Cottages. When a nomenclature does exist, it is nearly always a euphemism. The cottage is unambitious enough, save in this respect—a small card announces that a day school is held on the premises, and four steps lead to the door, which is opened by Mrs Smith, who belongs to the class of motherly and unsuspicious dames. She is delighted to see her visitor, and pours forth an incessant stream of information. Her scholars are of all ages, and she teaches them solely for her own amusement. It gives her something to do. They are downstairs, as of course she should not spoil the front parlour with them. She will lead the way—a wise precaution, considering

the precipitous character of the stairs; by themselves an excellent provision for younger children. The room is 12 feet by 9, with one window, which is always kept shut for fear the children should catch cold. There are twenty-five "scholars" huddled together on four parallel benches, some taking care of infantine brothers and sisters, others endeavouring to write upon minute particles of what once formed a slate. The old lady states that she once had forty, before the railroad came and pulled down many of the neighbouring houses, and she explains that at that time some of them sat in the passage. The children are neat and clean; in fact, the poorer class of dames' schools is remarkable in this respect, and even where the weekly fee is as low as 3d. and 2d., the prevalent cleanliness of face is most creditable to the parents. As for the instruction, it is decidedly elementary; for Mrs Smith's own spelling and writing would hardly bear a close scrutiny, while the number of strictly domestic articles in the corners of the room might throw some doubt upon the assertion that it was solely devoted to the purposes of education. The conversation in the cellar is

abruptly closed owing to the fall of one of the benches, and the consequent bumping together of two infants' heads, who cry simultaneously. On emerging into light, though not into air, the garrulous old lady enters into a history of her past life and her plans for the future, evidently under the impression that the School Board has passed several Acts for the alteration of the constitution of her particular school. She deprecates interference on the whole, and asserts that she has no intention of applying for Government aid. She pays 10s. 6d. a-week for her house, and has one lodger, a most repectable person. She is well known in the neighbourhood (a statement which the official, who recollects his difficulty in finding her, mentally denies), has conducted a school for eleven years, entirely to the satisfaction of the parents, and she ends her remarks by asking whether the opinion of her visitor does not coincide with her own upon the manner in which the school is carried on.

There is no want of schools in the neighbourhood, such as they are. In proportion to the poverty of the district is the number of day schools. When a certain stage of pauperism

has been reached, recourse is had either to keeping a mangle or a preparatory school, though which of the two is the less productive we will not venture to say. The stock in trade required for the latter is very slight. The hire of a little room, or outhouse, or shed, at 3s. 6d. a-week, two chairs, three low benches, four or five fragments of slate, and two torn spelling-books, constitute all that is necessary. The education of others is a last resource when all other means of livelihood have failed. The consequence is that the dames inveigh loudly against one another, and complain of the seduction of infants to their neighbours' back-kitchens. It is a generally-received opinion that any place is good enough for children, and the opinion is one which is acted upon. The schools, however, of the poorer class perform a certain service in keeping their tenants out of the streets for five hours during the day. Many are baby refuges, where there is hardly any question of instruction, and the old lady in charge very truly says that she is no "scholard, and just teaches the alphabet." Sometimes the whole of the front and back parlour is devoted to the purposes of

teaching, and forty children may be seen propped up against one another, whilst in the middle, rolling about the floor, admirably fenced in by the barrier of elder children, are a dozen babies between one and three years of age, with their hands well fixed in each other's hair. Sometimes the room is a cellar, so dark that a little time must elapse before the eye gets accustomed to the want of light, and through the dirt and *débris* and bedding which encumber the entrance a passage can be made to the school, which turns out to be the fender, upon which three miserable-looking children are sitting, unconscious of instruction, and playing with the cat. Here a dame has migrated from a fish-shop to the first floor over a beer-house, for which she pays 3s. 6d. a-week. The room is long and low, with a great bedstead at one end, and some forty children at the other. The occupation in this case is not one of amusement, but of bare subsistence, for many of the parents can hardly afford to pay 1d. a-week for their children. In the next street, one of those gloomy places containing from ninety to a hundred houses of yellow brick, all alike, built during the last

fifteen years yet looking mediæval in their dirt and decay, the school is being conducted in the midst of difficulties. The landlady is expecting her confinement hourly, while five of her children, half clothed, are breakfasting round a bowl in the kitchen. The teacher of the school is a lodger, with a room on the ground-floor, into which the children come through the window. Further on is a school held in the garret of an otherwise unoccupied house, its condition being easily accounted for by the diversity of extraordinary and abominable smells which issue in all directions. The dame is a powerful woman with a long cane, and her visitor at once expresses his satisfaction with all her arrangements, and congratulates her on the appearance of the seven little girls who compose her school. Here is another educational establishment, left in possession of a child of ten, whose mother is out for the day. The children are eleven in number, and it must be a work of some difficulty to prevent them from tumbling into the kitchen fire. A baby but a few months old is sleeping in the corner, to which the *locum tenens* proudly calls attention, and is not satisfied until it has

been thoroughly inspected. Nothing can well be humbler than this class, except those which are presided over by a male dame, whose chief characteristics are age and dirt. Nothing can equal the dirt of a dirty schoolmaster; his frock-coat the penwiper of half a century, his shirt the same colour as his coat, his chin shaved once a month, present a deplorable *ensemble*, while a suspicious and half-frightened look marks his countenance, as if he had been interrupted during the castigation of a pupil. In spite of what must seem an interference with private rights, it is seldom that the poorer dame refuses admittance to her house; a little querulous sometimes she may be, but she is always courteous, and willing to give whatever information she may possess about the district and its condition. This cannot be predicated of the higher stage of the profession, in which may be included ladies' seminaries, educational establishments, and select schools for young ladies; about these we feel certain that an absolute ignorance must prevail, and we shall not therefore apologise for entering into minute particulars about them.

II.

SAD and dreary as is the character of the streets and buildings in the poorest districts of London, yet occasionally in the desert of monotony a little oasis may be found redolent of a past century. Sometimes the lane which has forgotten all its old habits save that of winding expands into a common or green, where life is confined to the patriarchal donkey, tethered in the middle. Two or three large elms, dying perhaps, but not without a certain green semblance of vitality, group themselves in one corner. In another stands an old house, with gates of well-wrought iron-work, supported by heavy stone pillars, on the tops of which are two lions uprearing the family shield, very imposing, though perhaps a little affected by the smoke. Further on are some Georgian houses of mellow brick, now divided into cottages, their gardens bright with laburnum, lilac, and hawthorn, and retaining little that is suggestive of the merchant who once lived there. Next door a large brass plate, fixed to the railings, announces the fact

that a seminary for young ladies is conducted within. Some minutes elapse before the door is opened, for it may be broadly stated that the genius who presides over seminaries is suspicious of men. It is her mother in this case who makes her appearance, and wishes to know what is wanted. A long explanation follows, conducted with patience on the doorstep, resulting in the statement that the daughter is engaged in instruction, and cannot attend to any other business. More explanations ultimately produce the daughter, who shakes her black locks indignantly and defiantly at her visitor, and whose personal appearance conveys the impression that she must have been hiding in a cellar during several months to escape the inquisition of the census. She it is who "instructs the young ladies;" she thinks it exceedingly tiresome that any more questions should be asked, does not see the use of it, or that it can matter, and supposes that parents may do as they please with their own children. Frightened, however, by the long words which practice has enabled her visitor to pronounce with fluency, she says he may look at her school in a few minutes, and ushers him

into the front parlour, adding that it is too tiresome that she should lose her time in this way. The front parlour has a piano, a round mahogany table, on which are two volumes of congregational hymns, an arm-chair, and a few anti-macassars; it is evidently the room in which the parents of the young ladies make arrangements for their education. The mother appears and re-appears with a duster, and groans. But where is the seminary, and where are the young ladies? At last the daughter comes and says, "You can see my young ladies now," an interval of five minutes having doubtless enabled her to give the requisite *decora pellis*. The road is through the back kitchen, into a strip of garden ground, and the question again recurs as to the *locale* of the seminary. At the end of a garden is a little wooden shed of the most heterogeneous construction; it might have been originally intended to serve as shelter for a perambulator. It is fifteen feet long and about seven wide, with a roof which goes up and down in a manner which defies mensuration. Inside this are the young ladies, sitting on the narrowest of benches, round a stove which gives out a suffocating heat. The

window will do anything but open; could not the door be induced to admit some air? A smile appears upon the face of the teacher at this suggestion, as much as to say, "You little know the constitution of young ladies; it will kill them all; but never mind, pray go on." There is barely room to turn round, and the teacher monopolises the only chair, plunged in a state of sulky abstraction, and assuming the air of a victim. A seat can only be obtained by heaping a few of the children judiciously one upon the other, at the corner of a bench, from which it may be seen whether anything can be supposed still needful for the purposes of education, leaving out of the question the fact that the place is a seminary. It is evidently a most unfortunate moment; the window was just going to be mended, the drain was just going to be altered; the mistress is amazed at the answers given by her young ladies; they can all answer such questions at other times with perfect ease. It is clear that some malevolent fairy must have touched the seminary with a wand; had the visit only been made on any other day, at any other hour, the place would have appeared an

island of calm delights, the teacher a benignant and amiable fairy, surrounded by nymphs as conversant with the heights of mountains as with the depths of rivers, to whom no department of perfectly useless knowledge would have been unfamiliar.

As it is, the instruction is not all that could be wished; it is more easy to describe their knowledge negatively than positively; more easy to say what they are ignorant of than what they know. Here is a young lady of fourteen, who is described as having only just entered the establishment, and very backward, but who in all probability has acted as monitor for the last seven years. Whatever may be the truth of the first statement, the second admits of no contradiction. She is not in the least shy, which pains the mistress, who hints at intervals that her scholars are nervous. There is little doubt that a young lady is required to be nervous, and that she hardly ever is so; we may add that this generalisation, though bold, is the result of a study of many specimens. The big girl can read and write, but breaks down somewhat in her arithmetic. Her sums attain a prodigious

length and a marvellous result, owing to her invariable habit, shared by her companions, of writing down such a number as four thousand two hundred and twenty-one in the following elementary manner—400020021. When the mistress sees this, she observes that the method is new to the young ladies, and when Miss Rosa boldly asserts that Yorkshire is in South Wales, and that London is on the Tyne, she remarks that at present they are engaged on the geography of Europe. The credulous passer-by who sees advertisements to the effect that French is taught in the neighbouring seminary, may be under the impression that somebody is familiar with the language. This is not at all so. A French grammar is occasionally part of the educational furniture out of which a few words are mispronounced, and it is hard to say whether the young lady or her mistress perverts the sound more successfully. On the other hand, the young ladies and young gentlemen, in conformity with the wishes of their parents, the neighbouring grocer and publican, are designated respectively miss and master, and the prospectus issued contains the most formidable list of attain-

ments, from calisthenics to an acquaintance with physical sciences, or "physocal" sciences, as one teacher of a "select school for young ladies" prefers to write them. Many of the children are often quick and bright, and if Miss Rosa were not a young lady, she would be a very nice child, with her profusion of golden hair, her pretty face, and her string of blue beads. The young gentleman next to her in knickerbockers deserves a better fate also; but his parents, says the mistress with an indignant toss of the head, would never allow him to go to a common school—the boys are rough there, and none of her scholars would ever think of going to such a place. Nothing pains a mistress so much as an inquiry into the position or employment of the children's parents. In business? It is quite untrue; they are very "obliging" and as they happen to understand the subject, they collect groceries and spirits on all sides, bring them home, and give them to their friends for money." Caste is very strong, and the gentility of a cellar kitchen is preferable to the indignity of association with inferiors, though light and space and air and education may be the condi-

tions of the latter state. The seminary looks upon sewing as beneath contempt, and only does fancy work—most justly so called, if it implies that a wild stretch of imagination is required to conceive of its ever being useful for any possible purpose. The number of brass plates announcing the existence of these establishments is appalling, while quantities are springing up daily. Not unfrequently the teacher, peering through the half-closed door, conscious of the deficiencies of her establishment, asserts that "there is no occasion, it is not worth while; another day would suit her better, for things are not quite tidy;" sometimes hazarding the opinion, in which she is not far wrong, that inspection is a nuisance. Occasionally the situation is one which might make even the Besieged Resident shy. What is to be said to an infuriated woman with dishevelled curls, who runs into the middle of the road and says that "it is worse than the Inquisition, that it is outrageous, most outrageous, and that she well knows the tricks of Government, whose desire it is to shut up all other schools in order to fill its own"? The mænad, though answered in the most deprecatory

manner by allusions to the paternal character of a wise Government, and frequent quotations from the instructions issued by the Education Department, still rages on, until, finding herself the centre of an amused but unsympathetic audience, she retires to her seminary sulky but relieved.

There are other excitements than these to be experienced. Here in a miserable street is a dirty house, where everything connected with the place has an indescribable look of disease; the paint is off the door, which itself is half off its hinges: the plaster is cracking round it, and a stray brick is ready to fall on the smallest provocation; the window panes are mostly broken, and the open door enables the whole house to be seen almost at one glance, with its narrow passage, its fragments of paper hanging from the walls, its old discoloured whitewash, and its perpendicular staircase, the only playground of half-a-dozen children. Of course there is a knocker, and a weary-looking woman answers its sounds. She used to keep a school, but she had lost a child from smallpox, and thought it therefore prudent to discontinue it

for the present. Would she have assistance from Government? In the next street, a whole ragged school had taken flight, so severe have been the ravages from smallpox in the immediate neighbourhood. The official, in a moment of weak patronage, suggests his hope to a mother, who is sitting on the doorstep opposite, that the two children who are rolling in the gutter have been vaccinated. "I have lost two from illness, and those two have just had it," is the reply, which leaves nothing further to be said. It is natural enough that the poor should have recourse to euphemisms, and illness is the recognised equivalent for smallpox. "My daughter is ill," says a schoolmaster: "she helps me in teaching, so we have given our scholars a holiday just now." The man evidently wishes the information to be kept from his neighbours, and endeavours to place his mouth in contact with his visitor's ear, which nothing but the continual revolution of an umbrella can prevent. Here the landlady calls the teacher to answer the inquiries made about her school, though her appearance at once discloses the reason why, "for the present," the school must be given up.

Here is a school which is pleased to call itself "A Collegiate Establishment," of a peculiarly dirty aspect. The door is opened by an untidy man and still more untidy woman; on entering the house there is a strong smell of carbolic acid and a noise of many children. Nobody is ill, they assert, but on pressure they admit that a child is suffering upstairs from inflammation of lungs, and after a little more pressure they own that their two children have just returned from the neighbouring smallpox hospital, with the qualification that the cases were very slight ones. "Maria!" "Fanny!" calls the mistress, and the two recently discharged patients rush forward into the passage, and begin to play round the startled official. Maria is evidently much pleased at seeing a little society, as for some time she has probably not been accustomed to have a keen interest taken in her personally. "You are afraid," ejaculates the mistress to her visitor, who to her surprise willingly admits it, assuring her that he has no wish whatever to see any more of Maria. They had given holidays on account of the illness, but could not afford to continue them any longer, and the

school had therefore re-assembled the preceding week: "they must make a living."

When the collection of the children's pence is thus the primary and indeed the sole object, it is not to be wondered at if the want of education is only to be equalled by the want of educational furniture. Some of these schools changed their character early in the year, and by raising their weekly fees to tenpence and a shilling placed themselves outside the jurisdiction of the Act and the province of inspection. There is no reason, however, to suppose that any other change has taken place, or that the middle-class school so constituted is likely to have benefited by the alteration, and become more efficient because its terms are higher. Many of these establishments indeed have been given up, but, on the other hand, others are springing into existence from which no returns have been received. We can only hope that inspection will extend itself to these as well as to the higher class, though we do not know what provision can be made for continuing such inquiries permanently. The system of certificates might perhaps be carried further,

and licenses to keep a school be required, before the receipt of which it should be incumbent upon the applicant to prove that she possessed the necessary accommodation and was able to fulfil the requisite conditions for the purposes of education. As it is, the school is first started, to be then condemned; yet the condemnation cannot take effect until the new rate-provided schools have been built, and until the whole compulsory powers given by the Act are put into force. Obstacles will even then intervene. By the seventy-fourth section the first reasonable excuse which the parents of children may plead for not complying with the by-laws of a School Board requiring them to "cause their children to attend school" is—"that the child is under efficient instruction in some other manner." The parents may consequently state that their children are receiving satisfactory education in schools which have either not been inspected, or by an alteration in their premises have endeavoured to comply with the requirements of the Education Department. In each case a separate inquiry will then have to be made into the particular school in question, and

a fresh amount of labour will devolve upon the Board or the Department. The difficulties of the question are only just beginning, but in proportion to the knowledge gained will be the conclusion that we cannot afford to put off grappling with them. No small amount of interest attaches itself to the dame who keeps thirty children out of the streets and herself from pauperism by her exertions, and who says without complaint that she supposes she shall go to the workhouse when her school is taken away from her; but nobody can pity the fate that may overtake the shabby gentility, dirt, inefficiency, and ignorance of Dothegirls Hall.

PRIVATE SCHOOLS.

THE inquiry undertaken by the Education Department into the efficiency of schools involved two considerations—namely, the state of the premises and the character of the instruction given in the school. The conditions which the premises were expected to fulfil, besides those of being well-lighted, ventilated, and drained, included that of possessing suitable offices—*i.e.*, offices used exclusively by the children attending the school; a requirement which would by itself, we believe, incapacitate all save a fraction of the 1927 adventure schools in the metropolis. Where therefore no possible means existed of making any changes, and where there was already ample reason for condemnation, it

was obviously unnecessary to inquire into the character of the instruction. In the case, however, of private schools this second qualification had to be strictly tested; some of them possessed excellent accommodation, good playgrounds, and an adequate supply of educational furniture, while others expressed their readiness to make any changes which might be considered requisite in their buildings. It remained, therefore, to ascertain the efficiency of the instruction.

The Education Department very properly believed that there is not in human beings an innate capacity of examining children. The process may be compared to pin-making—easy in proportion to the division of labour. If at the same moment of time one inspector placed all the children in a line, another gave them slates, a third dictated sums to them, a fourth heard them read, a fifth supplied them with intelligence, while a sixth engaged the attention of the clergyman and the mistress, a great saving of labour would be effected, and the economic results would naturally be immense. The following are "practical hints suggested by past experience." We quote from the Instruc-

tions to Inspectors on the examination of children in public elementary schools :—

"All the children are formed into a line according to their places in the schedule, and not having anything in their hand but their slates, on which they have done their sums and transcription, they pass the Inspector, one by one. As each comes up he hands his slate to the Inspector, who gives him the book open and points where he is to read; while listening to the reading, the arithmetic and writing can be marked on the schedule; the Inspector turns rapidly over a few pages of the book, and the child reads again; he then gives back the book, takes his slate, and goes to his place, while the next child comes up, gives his slate, and is dealt with in the same manner."

This is ideal; the stern reality, we submit, is likely to be as follows. The children, though formed into a line, refuse to remain in it; though they have nothing but their slates in their hands. they immediately drop them; having done their sums and transcription, they forthwith proceed to rub them both out; the Inspector having handed them a book open, they shut it; the Inspector having found the place, they lose it. While they are endeavouring to find it, the Inspector discovers that the slate is a blank; at this juncture the child drops the book; the mistress observes that it is her sister who ought to have been examined in that standard; the

Committee make a brisk and effective interruption for the fifth time, when the Inspector goes into a fit, and the rest are dealt with in the same manner. The examination of a child will thus equal in duration the single-handed manufacture of a pin.

Copious as are the instructions from which we have quoted, there are many particulars into which they might have entered with advantage. What, for instance, is the proper behaviour to be maintained towards the Methodist who encloses leaflets in his letters of business, and uses an unintelligible vocabulary; or towards the Anglican who says that Father Blank has just left, and that the late mistress, Sister Agnes, has gone to the Sisterhood at the Priory? What line of treatment is to be adopted towards a spectacled Committee who sit like hens over their scholars, and whom probably nothing would dislodge except making the highest standard read out of Paul de Kock? What arguments, or what reasoning, can be brought into play which will enlighten the impenetrable stupidity of the contradictory manager? Though intrusted with the care, or at any rate the

supervision, of a school, he has the most elementary notions with regard to the recent changes. Indeed we much prefer the total ignorance of the dame to the misconceptions of either a Committee or a manager. The dame believes that Government has decreed the extinction of her particular school, which decree is to be executed by the agency of two officials. She asks when extinction will come to pass, and is pleased at being told that a considerable interval must elapse before that desirable result is effected. The manager, on the other hand, has a vague fear of something which ought to be the consequence of an investigation into his bad management, but declines to contemplate the possibility of Government interfering with him. He does not see in the least that the object of legislation is to prevent the sale of bad education in damp premises; if he has read the Act, he asks an infinity of questions, the answers to which he disputes. He has unhappily one great advantage over the dame; for he is not pounced upon without notice, but has time given him to prepare both the school and its teachers. Another consequence of this de-

lay is to arm other forces in his behalf, and to enable the Committee to muster upon the appointed day. Three or four women presided over by a colleague in spectacles, whose aspect is sufficient to strike the most hardened with awe, may then be found already assembled in the school at half-past ten. They look upon the proceedings as an act of impertinence which will put to the test whatever Christianity they may possess. For a time all goes on well. The school-room is large and airy, well built, and suitable for the purpose. The children are clean and neat, and it is not until a selection of them is made for examination that the first attacks begin to be made. "The children are not accustomed to this sort of thing; you see we conduct it differently, and we may say it answers very well;" or, "we know nothing about your standards; we only look to efficiency," as a further stage is reached. It is in vain to hint that the examination will not interest them; they usurp the best seats, determined to see the end of it. The mistress is inclined to be insubordinate, fortified by the example of the Committee. When several of the children

show a complete ignorance of the subtraction of units, the spokeswoman turns round and asks the poor official whether he does not consider religious instruction of far greater importance, whereupon the secular representative can only utter some unintelligible secular mutterings. Encouraged by the success of this onslaught, she next wonders at the difficulty of some question, asserting that when she was ten years old she could not have answered it—an irrelevant, though doubtless an incontrovertible, statement. When the teacher is invited to show the accounts, she glares, and says that she has them at home, while her colleagues sympathise with her in this attack upon her probity. Her contempt culminates when the schoolmistress brings a large basket of linen and empties it upon the table, displaying the most varied forms of needlework, and the most diversified articles of clothing which the human body is capable of wearing. She will seduce, upon some faint pretext, the teacher from the infant-school, leaving the terrified official the *vis-à-vis* of fifty babies. Had Boswell only been a School Inspector, nobody would have thought his celebrated ques-

tion, "If, sir, you were shut up in a castle, and a new-born child with you, what would you do?" ill-timed or unnecessary. In this case his august patron's suggested mode of treatment is impossible, as the means of "feeding it and washing it with warm water to please it" do not exist. As long as the teacher is present the layers of infants preserve a dignified composure, as they rise one above the other on the gallery devoted to their convenience. But no sooner is the controlling mind taken away than the character of the scene is changed. "Teacher," murmurs one; "teacher," murmurs another; the rest of the sentences being drowned by the increasing noise. Two babies on the top row engage in a fight, which results in the fall of their neighbour into the second row, by which harmony is not promoted. Two or three children on the bottom row insist on walking about, and the confusion is only terminated by the re-entry of the mistress.

A school of this kind would be efficient enough were it not for the perpetual interference of the visitors, who take the teaching out of the hands of the mistress, and give effect to

their own special views, to the exclusion of all other subjects. Arithmetic is rarely taught with any success, and we should doubt whether the percentage of passes in this subject required by the Department was to be found in more than a few out of the 343 private schools in question. The private school is sometimes in as miserable a condition as the adventure school, if not a worse one, owing to its greater pretensions. Funds are not forthcoming perhaps, and repairs cannot be undertaken. The damp is running down the walls, and the whole school is congregated in one room. Four or five classes are being instructed by monitors, who are noisily hurrying to and fro, while a chronic fall of slates prevents the possibility of a remark being heard. Everything is damp; the walls are in holes; the Scriptural *affiches* refuse to cling any longer to them. The mistress is full of useless energy, and at intervals rings a little bell, which creates a momentary effect, after which the infants begin again to chatter, the slates to tumble, and the benches to rattle in one universal Babel. The instruction is naturally of the same character as the building, at least as far as a secular

inquiry can test it. A very favourite mode of economising space is to appropriate the basement or cellar floor under a chapel or room devoted to religious services. The Government is not prepared to grant any aid under such circumstances, and it is difficult to conceive of a school so situated ever attaining a high state of efficiency. The windows admit no light; the steps are a terror to the infants; the difficulties of the drainage are increased; and the room itself is used for a variety of purposes. In one case the floor on which the infants were seated presented the oddest appearance. The boarding was divided into squares, as though it constituted some map which the children were employed in taking to pieces and fitting together again. On inquiry, this turned out to be the baptising bath, over which the unconscious babies were exposed to the double peril of death by drowning and infant baptism, not to say the certainty of catching a cold in the head. The schoolmistress, pleased at the interest shown by her visitor, removed the pieces, and displayed a vast tank, half full of water, approached by steps.

The excitement was great, and it was in vain that the children were entreated to return to their places. First one and then another scampered to the brink, and discipline was at an end. It must have been an epoch in their lives, for it was the first time they had seen it. In the little playground attached to the building were the clothes worn on the preceding evening by the newly baptised hanging up to dry, so that possibly the same quantity of water is not always underlying the unfortunate infants.

In some neighbourhoods the school is the only approach to civilisation that can be found. From streets where the windows have not a flower to brighten them, where squalid women hurry to and fro, prematurely old, and where not only pauperism but starvation shows itself in the faces around, the change into the schoolroom is a great relief. Here and there a jacket or a waistcoat may be missing, and the boots and shoes scarcely be a covering to the feet, but the mere existence of order, or peace, or cleanliness, is by itself an incalculable blessing.

Here it is that the difficulties in the way of compulsory attendance make themselves seen. At the age of ten the child can earn enough to tempt her mother to withdraw her from school. She will occupy the position of a miniature dame, and "mind the baby"—perhaps getting a shilling a-week and her food, or her tea, or even only ninepence. Sometimes a compromise may be entered into, and the child will earn her shilling by the morning's work and go to school in the afternoon. In one case a family of three persons was dependent upon the one weekly shilling earned by the child. It is the same with the boys. They will go at ten or eleven to the cabinetmaker, or the shoemaker, or any trade in the minor operations of which their labour can be made serviceable. The attendance is so irregular that no child has a chance of making any real advance in knowledge. When they do come they are not always fit to work. "A child can't learn much who has had no breakfast," as one schoolmistress observed. They pass in and out of school, picking up a little reading and writing perhaps, and then going out to toil all

and every day for the smallest of wages, with no hope of ever bettering their own condition or that of their family. Compulsory attendance, as Mr Fawcett points out, would improve this condition of things. This supply of juvenile labour would be lessened, which would tend to raise the price. "The remuneration given to such labour would consequently increase, and children would not lose as much as half their previous earnings although they were only able to work half the time they did before." It will be seen that the line of demarcation which separates the private from the public school is very slight, and that the distinction is merely a technical one. The re-constitution of a great many of these schools may be looked upon as a consequence of the Act, while others will not continue to struggle any longer against the difficulties of insufficient funds and premises. Their inspection will only add another proof of the enormous disparity between the nominal and the actual school accommodation existing in the metropolis. If the education question presents any difficulties, it is not for want of its discussion.

During the past week or two everybody has had something to say upon the subject. Lord Granville very truly says that the results of science are very useful, and that a knowledge of modern languages is necessary; but we are compelled to differ with him when he "feels that there is something in the study of science that makes a man feel that in talking he must eschew all redundant and irrelevant verbiage." Perhaps, however, Lord Granville was not referring to social science. Sir John Pakington quotes from his past speeches to show their force, and contributes but little help in stating that the question of compulsory attendance is novel, difficult, and all-important, and that the task before the Government is one of magnitude and difficulty. The Bishop of Peterborough asserts that a Government Inspector is a reasonable and sensible man, in which we trust the Bishop is right. Mr Forster naturally is guarded, and says that it will be "a delicate business passing the law of compulsion, but a still more delicate business enforcing it, and that care must be taken not to go too fast and too quick, and set public opinion

upon the side of the parent." There will be an inordinate supply of verbiage during the course of this and the ensuing month; it is, however, unreasonable to hope that anybody will contribute to the solution of difficulties, instead of being contented with the assertion of their existence.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

THE ordinary conception of a National School is formed under favourable circumstances, drawn perhaps from a visit to some quiet country parish where an eccentric erection, built at an extravagant price by the local architect, whose ignorance on the subject exceeds even that of the squire, combines every known and unknown form of decoration, and stands in the middle of a large playground, flanked on one side by the church and on the other by the parsonage. The whole scene is idyllic; the children are neat and clean, know their names, and answer to them; the walls are covered with maps of obscure countries and islands, which have probably never been visited since their discovery; the infants present symmetrical rows of white

legs and arms, as broad as they are long, sing with animation, and gesticulate with emphasis. The mistress is conversant with the alterations introduced by the New Code, has no complaints to make, and would prefer a daily inspection; while the hints suggested by the clergyman and his wife are of the most valuable nature, based as they are upon the experiences acquired by the nurture and training of a family of thirteen children. In London, however, the conditions are very different; there is no waste ground at hand, a site can only be obtained with difficulty, and when obtained is often subject to grave disadvantages. The noise of the neighbouring traffic, the tramp of the children in an upper room, or the vibration produced by the adjoining railroad, make even elementary instruction a work of some difficulty." The number of schools in the metropolis defined as public, from which returns have been received, amounts to 860, a large proportion of which are already aided by annual grants; to the remainder of them the remarks which we made on private schools apply with equal truth. Nothing is more probable than that, if the school satisfies

the first of the two tests required by the Education Department—namely, the satisfactory condition of the premises in which it is held—it will still fail in the second—namely, "the qualifications of the teacher as shown by the results of the secular instruction given in the school." The reading will be muttering, the writing a scrawl, and the ciphering a blank; yet the standard of efficiency fixed upon is a low one, involving the knowledge of the "multiplication table and any simple rule as far as division" by children above ten years of age alone, who in many cases are presented in the grade below that in which they ought to have been examined. Low as it is, it will disqualify many of the schools inspected, and the anticipation of the Education Department that the standard required by them would not be generally satisfied, and "that the provision of a supply of efficient school buildings would be the main result to be expected from this part of the inquiry," will have been amply realised. In some respects this year may have been an unfortunate one, as the attendance has been rendered more than ordinarily irregular by the prevalence of small-

pox. In one school forty children were absent at the same time from this cause, either having the disease themselves or in their homes. In another two of the monitors suffered from it—a state of things not conducive to the efficiency of the instruction. Not only is scarcely any proficiency shown in extra subjects, such as grammar, history, and geography, but the presentation of children in the highest standards is of the rarest occurrence. In fact, the work of other schools, as well as that of schools in receipt of annual grants, tends to show that the regulations of the New Code provide for a degree of proficiency quite as high as is likely to be reached for some years to come. The Report of the Committee of Council for the year 1870 states, that of scholars over ten years of age, those who passed without failure in the three higher standards were only 32.86 out of 100; adding at the same time that these results, though they show a slight improvement upon previous years, are far from satisfactory. Mr Mitchell, in his Report on a London district, says:—

"In our best schools the education has not much ex-

ceeded the education given twenty years back in the best schools of that period. The caution given in 1853 may still be useful, that educationists in the pursuit of higher subjects should not endeavour to advance too rapidly. No attempts at extra branches can at all compensate for deficiency in the ordinary subjects of elementary instruction."

The inference to be drawn from this and other expressions of similar opinions is evident enough, but it is not likely to be attended to by those who desire that our population should at once enter into the highest stages of proficiency before they have mastered the earliest and the simplest. We almost wonder that no contract has as yet been made for a supply of linguists, in order that the children of the poor may, though unable to satisfy their wants, have at least the satisfaction of expressing them in another language. The profession of an Inspector will soon be chosen early in life, and afford an opening for our surplus population. At the present moment his qualifications should be of the following nature, as gathered from the points on which he has to exercise his judgment. He should possess a technical knowledge of buildings, have a keen sense of smell—the only test he can apply to the question of drainage—an

intimate acquaintance with the works of Mr Moule and clear opinions on the subject, an excellent temper, great tact, and views upon needlework. It is clear that, if he were not permitted to "delegate to an assistant the duty of examining into the attendance and the proficiency of the scholars," the work before him would be one of no ordinary difficulty. In the examination of female pupil-teachers, the opinion of a competent person is to be obtained upon the merit of the needlework; so, when cooking and swimming and physical sciences become a *sine quâ non* of elementary education, a congress of cooks and professors, itinerant philosophers and lecturers, will doubtless accompany the Inspector on his rounds, or rather the Inspectors, seeing that the London School Board has announced its intention of appointing its own officers. After the guests and scholars have swum round the swimming-bath, preceded by the pupil-teachers, in a costume the designs for which will have cost several hundred pounds, a dinner will probably be provided at the expense of the unfortunate ratepayers, cooked by the children attending the school. Peremptory

instructions will at the same time be issued to the philosophers not to read their own papers, on pain of eating the failures dished up by the first standard. Several independent Leagues and Societies will also send officers round to each child, to ascertain whether he has any cause of complaint against the Government, the School Board, or his parents; whether he would not like to change his school, or inspect others, and generally suggest an independent course of action to be followed out.

We are fast losing sight of the real ends of Education Acts in the midst of denominational and undenominational clamours, those ends being, we imagine, to raise the standard of life among the poorer classes, to spread the knowledge of social laws which are now only known to a few, without which no efforts to alleviate the disparity existing at present can succeed, and not to raise one party at the expense of another, or to enable a third party to congratulate itself upon having achieved a political victory. At present everything is in a transition state. Were of course an educational Utopia established, compulsory attendance universally

and efficiently enforced, and all the papers read and burnt which have still to be written on the subject, no doubt many improvements would be found practicable, and the matter might be settled upon what is called a satisfactory basis. Having regard, however, to the attitude adopted by many of the speakers at Birmingham, we cannot be very sanguine. Whatever may be the opinions held with regard to the payment of fees to denominational schools, it is hardly satisfactory that those upon whom we inflict a pecuniary loss by compelling them to send their children to school, should read in the newspapers that a county magistrate was greatly cheered for declaring that he would not pay any rate where the money was used to pay the fees in denominational schools, while others asserted "that they would take the spoiling of their goods, and some of them would go to prison." The example of obedience to the law set by those in authority is striking indeed, and promises well for the future. The only consolation is the want of interest shown in their proceedings; for we are credibly informed that a great number of the inhabitants of Birmingham

were hardly aware of the presence of the League amongst them.

Though all elementary schools were divided into the three classes of public, private, and adventure, some anomalous institutions have been reckoned amongst the number which can hardly be so classified. In some cases returns have been received from establishments, and visits paid to them, where official visitors had little or no business. In a Refuge where the youngest of the inmates is above fifteen years of age, education becomes, as it were, a luxury out of the range of State control. If only those who have conscientious scruples against receiving information could lie hid until past the age of thirteen, we imagine that neither State nor School Board has authority to interfere with their liberty. Education in a Refuge is naturally domestic in its tendency, while the instruction must necessarily be rather of a religious than a secular character, and arithmetic be considered of secondary importance in the reclamation of a criminal. The scrupulous cleanliness of the floors, and indeed of everything which is capable of being washed, attests to the prevalence of

one most desirable occupation. Cognate to the Refuge is the Home, which is generally on a smaller scale. The phraseology of a Report before us might lead the reader to suppose that little attention was paid within its walls to secular instruction. "The past year has been 'Ebenezer' from first to last." The means for the work—namely, the maintenance of twenty five destitute girls—seem to be supplied from day to day, and the Home is apparently often without funds to continue its existence another week; the most varied contributions, however, arrive—a very Noah's ark of subscriptions. Anti-macassars, ear-rings, infants' pinafores, smoked bacon, cotton hose, potatoes, cocoa matting, a fish-slice, meat dripping, a spirit-flask, a button-hook, and a pair of large scissors, make their appearance, together with sums of money. At one time the whole available stock in hand consists of 3d., when help arrives from "a dear Christian lady," whose qualifying statement most persons will agree with. "Perhaps those of us who are able to help have not always the needful spiritual discernment to distribute it just in the right way, unless we know some-

thing of the circumstances." The Report goes on to say that many sweet instances of deliverance in time of difficulty are noticed; many more are silently recorded from want of space to enlarge; while "fellowship in prayer is solicited that we may be led into a suitable house, and all things needful be supplied." Strange to say the work done in this instance was very good; the house was small, but clean; the elder girls were engaged in domestic training, while the younger ones were being taught in the schoolroom. Very quiet children they mostly were, and intelligent, but stunted in their growth, and showing in their looks how hard a struggle life had been to them previously to their admission.

The varieties of educational nomenclature are surprising; there are schools of industry; middle-class academies; commercial academics, as miserable in appearance as the commercial room at an English inn, where the sons of respectable mechanics lose their time for years together; Pestalozzian schools, where the instruction given is of a character which the founder of the system could never have foreseen,

in spite of the following sentence which we quote from the *Biographie Universelle*:—"La méthode de Pestalozzi suppose dans l'esprit une puissance indépendante des circonstances extérieures, et qui n'a pas besoin de leur secours." Such a supposition would go far to excuse the present state of the educational appliances in London schools. By the end of 1871 all the reports on the efficiency of the schools in the metropolitan divisions should be in the hands of the Education Department, though some of those for the rural districts will probably not be completed until the spring of next year; their tabulation will show the amount of efficient school accommodation now existing, and the deficiency yet to be provided for, of which at present we can form no approximate estimate. The adventure schools as a body will theoretically be swept away, though a certain number may be deemed temporarily efficient, in consequence of their decent performance of a certain amount of work—such, for instance, as those of which Crabbe wrote:—

> "Where a deaf, poor, patient widow sits,
> And awes some thirty infants as she knits;

> Infants of humble busy wives who pay
> Some trifling price for freedom through the day.
> Her room is small, they cannot widely stray;
> Her threshold high, they cannot run away."

Civilisation has effected many changes since the year 1810, but it evidently has not in the least altered the characteristics of the dame's school. We do not, however, see the possibility of the continued recognition of even a fraction of them. No class requires such constant supervision; yet how is the supervision to be exercised, and how is Government to prevent the use of a room by fifty children which is only capable of holding thirty? Unless the number of inspectors exceeds that of the children, they will have very much their own way. They will disappear from one place to start up again in another, and the hunt after a dame's school will continue to be one of the most exciting among the pleasures of the chase. We have already pointed out the difficulties likely to ensue in the case of those which have been condemned, through the first "reasonable excuse" in the 74th section of the Act. Some, we fear, will be enabled to raise their terms, and to give precisely the same

education in the same premises, owing to the inherent vulgarity of the British parent, unless the definition of elementary education is amended, and the present maximum of 9d. no longer adhered to. Many changes will naturally be made during the next few years, if only the present Act is given a fair trial. It has not begun its operations, yet the results which its complete success could alone produce are already required from it. The Boards have as yet hardly any data on which they can proceed. Being composed of very human and sectarian materials, it is quite possible that they may fail; but if they do so, it will only indefinitely protract the settlement of a question which, though complicated enough in Mr Forster's hands, would become in those of his successor simply insoluble.

METROPOLITAN SCHOOLS.

THE "Report of the School Board for London to the Education Department," which has recently been issued, enables us to supplement the information we gave in a former article on metropolitan schools (November 4, 1871), in which we speculated upon the probable consequences which would result from the inquiries conducted during the course of last year, and suggested some of the difficulties likely to occur. The Report before us consists of fourteen pages, and is followed by three appendices, containing the census of children, the tabulation of the reports sent by the inspectors of schools and of returns, and the deficiency of school accommodation. It begins by describing the labours of the Board since its first meeting in December 1870. On

the 20th of April, 1871, the Board received instructions to report upon the following points:—

"1. The number of children within its limits for whom means of elementary education should be provided between the ages of three and five, and between the ages of five and thirteen.

"2. The provision to meet the requirements of these children already made by efficient schools, or likely to be made by schools either contemplated or in course of erection.

"3. The deficiency (if any) in the supply of efficient elementary education, as shown by comparing 1 and 2.

"4. What schools are required to meet this deficiency.

"5. The localities in which such schools should be provided."

Of these five points the first alone can be said to be accurately ascertained. The Board, with the help of the Census Office and their own staff of enumerators, after eliminating children who attended or should attend a school not elementary and children in institutions, arrived at the conclusion that the gross number of children between the ages of three and thirteen who were attending elementary schools was 398,679. The number of those who required elementary schools, but did not attend, was 176,014. After deducting the reasonable and necessary causes of absence, it was computed that 80,039 had no excuse for non-attendance, and consequently

that the whole number of children for whom elementary schools should be provided was 478,718. With regard to the second point, our readers are aware that the Education Department conducted this branch of the investigation "(the Board having no staff immediately available for the purpose)," made inquiries into the efficiency of the public, private, and adventure schools existing or projected in the metropolis, and concluded its labours at the close of last year; 3275 existing or projected elementary schools had to be taken into account, affording accommodation for 413,233 scholars. Had, therefore, all these schools proved efficient, additional provision would only have been required for some 40,000 scholars. This, however, was far from being the case, and out of these 3275 schools, 1876 were condemned, consisting of 74 public, 122 private, and 1680 adventure schools. With regard to these latter schools, the Report says:—

"Under the circumstances of the case, the Board submitted to the Department that it would not be advisable to interpret too literally the requirements of the Department as laid down in the new Code. Some latitude must be allowed, so that if a school could pass in a certain standard in the

first instance, time might be given for the attainment of a higher standard. As the Inspectors completed their examination of different districts, their conclusions were communicated to the Board. Some schools were passed both for buildings and instruction, and these are consequently classed with the efficient schools. Others were condemned in both respects, and have, therefore, not been taken into account as providing suitable accommodation. But an intermediate class of schools has been reported to be efficient either in buildings or instruction, but not in both; and with reference to these, the Board have obtained the consent of the Department that a period of grace should be accorded to them. To the managers of all schools in this category a circular has been addressed inviting them within three months to bring their schools up to the necessary standard of efficiency, and undertaking that meantime the accommodation they provide shall provisionally be taken into account."

The consequence of this period of grace, which appears to us a needless complication, is that at the present moment there are two classes of schools recognised; first, the schools reported to be efficient in both building and instruction, amounting in number to 1,149; and secondly, those efficient in either building or instruction, of which the number is 250. These latter provide accommodation for 37,995 children, and are composed of 60 public, 96 private, 81 adventure, and 13 projected schools. "Of the adventure schools, 32 are reported as efficient

in building and 49 in instruction only. We have pointed out before the extreme improbability of any change being effected in the constitution of these schools, and therefore these 81 may be regarded as condemned. The inquiries made last year were conducted on the assumption that where the buildings were unfit for educational purposes it was useless to enter into the question of instruction; had it been otherwise, a considerable fraction of the 1680 condemned adventure schools might have been reported as efficient in instruction only. The character of the instruction was virtually a second test, to be applied in those cases where the condition of the premises was satisfactory. It is quite evident, however, in looking over the tabulated returns in the second Appendix of the Report, that different standards have been applied in different districts in the examination of these schools. In Lambeth alone 89 adventure schools out of 413 have been recognised —that is to say, more than one-half of the whole number of adventure schools pronounced efficient (162) are in one single district out of the ten of which the metropolis is composed.

On the other hand, if we turn to Southwark, we find that only seven out of 276 have been recognised, in the Tower Hamlets two out of 297, while in Marylebone only one out of 81 has been passed as efficient, and no dame's school reported as efficient in instruction only. There is no reason to suppose that a lower standard of education is required for Lambeth, nor is the deficiency of school accommodation as great as in the division of the Tower Hamlets, where nearly one-third of the children requiring accommodation are unprovided for. It is clear from this that, had the instructions issued by the Education Department been understood and acted upon in the same manner by all the inspectors, not more than a score of these schools would have been left in existence, and the provisional recognition of 243 out of 1923 must be ascribed to a relaxation of these instructions, and an amiability of disposition on the part of the official employed. The inspection of adventure schools appears to have been a kind of compromise between the School Board and the Education Department, offices which naturally looked upon the condemnation of schools in

different lights, as upon the former devolved the duty of making good the deficiencies created by the reports of the latter. The object of the Education Department must have been simply to put an end to education as a means of subsistence for the teachers, and the conditions of efficiency they required were precise enough to leave but little scope for the exercise of individual opinion. At the time the Department issued these instructions they must have been aware that they would disqualify all save a fraction, and we may doubt whether it would not have been better to have ignored these schools altogether, and spared 1923 teachers the shock which their nerves sustained from a visit on the part of the Government. Had this been done, the grievance would have been universal, and no provisionally recognised teacher could have excited envy. It is of course possible that the 1876 condemned schools may all be remodelled, and that all those which have received invitations to better themselves may respond to them. But we believe that further investigation will only tend to diminish the amount of accommodation provisionally recognised; some of the

proposed enlargements will never be carried into effect, many of the projected schools will remain projected, others will be reconstituted as non-elementary schools, and others fail to attain the standard which they may be required to reach during the course of this year. The results of this inquiry will not, however, make themselves felt for a long time. Did we see any likelihood of the dames being immediately affected by their condemnation we should recommend them to migrate in a body to Lambeth; but they are still unconscious of their doom. We made an expedition to a street rife with "seminaries" to see whether the Report before us was a common text-book. But no one had seen it. Strange to say, no dame had endeavoured to seduce her neighbours' children by an advertisement stating that, though deficient in offices, her instruction was excellent; or that she herself would spell correctly in the course of three months, and bring herself up to the level of her educational furniture. The dame is probably well aware that her life is not worth the number of years which will elapse before the erection of the new metropolitan schools—

an interval long enough in all probability to enable an architect to appear to whom their construction might be intrusted with safety. The chief difference between the condemned and the partially recognised school is that the owner of the former will be left in peace, while that of the latter will, we suppose, again receive visits from enumerators or inspectors. The remarks of the School Board do not tend to increase the value of the statistics upon which they purpose to act; the data which have been arrived at are based upon an allowance of eight superficial feet to each child, concerning which the Report says, "It may be doubted whether this amount is sufficient in any case"—a statement the reverse of assuring.

These two classes of provisionally recognised schools are calculated to afford accommodation for 350,720 children, while the accommodation required is for 498,718. The Board, therefore, after deducting a percentage for temporary causes of absence, has arrived at the conclusion that places must be provided for 103,863, and they ask the Department to authorise the immediate provision of schools for 100,600 chil-

dren. In five out of the ten divisions accommodation in excess of the deficiency to the extent of 9790 school places is recommended, owing to the unequal distribution of the schools in existence. Marylebone has a deficiency of 3140 places, and it is proposed to provide accommodation for 7900 children. The City of London has an excess of 1418 places, none of which are available to balance a deficiency of 673 places in one of its subdivisions. Of the remaining five divisions of Finsbury, Hackney, Lambeth, Southwark, and the Tower Hamlets, Hackney, which includes the districts of Bethnal Green, Shoreditch, and Homerton, is relatively to its population the most ill-provided with school accommodation, having only 34,851 existing and projected places for 56,906 children, or a deficiency of more than one-third. In these five divisions where the estimated deficiency is 94,121, the Board recommends the immediate provision of school accommodation for 79,650 children:—

"The reasons for this modified proposal may be briefly stated as follow—To provide schools, even for 100,000 children, will be a task which will not easily be accomplished in eighteen

months or two years. During that time the Board will have the opportunity of watching the operation of many causes, the effect of which is at present wholly undetermined. How will the Bye-laws work? the second, which enforces the attendance of children at school; and the fourth, which exempts them from attendance under certain conditions? Will the Half-time Acts, which at present are almost a dead letter, come into more general operation? To what extent will schools which have been condemned by Her Majesty's Inspectors transfer themselves to the Board, and be made efficient? These and other causes may contribute to reduce the deficiency of school accommodation which now appears to exist. Lastly, there is the growing difficulty of obtaining qualified teachers for elementary schools, the number of which is increasing day by day."

The chief point in the above quotation is that the effect of many causes is wholly undetermined, and we may add will probably remain so, until a certain number of mistakes has been made. The Report asks various questions without much expectation of receiving answers, and we shall venture to imitate their example. Will it be easier to find teachers for schools of from 750 to 1500 children (the number preferred by the Board) than for communities of a smaller extent? How will the payment of school fees be enforced? What is to be the future system of investigation and examination of private schools? The Report before us seems

to imply that the inspection of last year was undertaken by the Education Department because the Board had no staff immediately available for the purpose. It is a matter perfectly immaterial to the public who the officials are who inspect metropolitan schools, but it is important that it should be done as simply as possible, and that the expenses of a dual government should be avoided. It may be that all these matters remain to be decided, like the sites and the sizes and the number of schools which it is proposed to erect; the next Report of the School Board will, we trust, enlighten us upon many points "at present undetermined."

FASHIONABLE SCRAMBLES IN COUNTRY HOUSES.

If Charles Lamb had been in the habit of spending the winter in the country, and of paying visits during that season to his neighbours, or indeed to anybody else's neighbours, it is more than probable that he would have added another to his list of fallacies. Some paragraph would have borne for its heading, "That a Country-house must be Pleasant." There are various methods by which human beings are enabled to gauge their progress in the world, and to ascertain their social age. One of these is the loss of illusions. It may take place very gradually, but before the age of thirty-five has been attained the pleasure of mere visiting is apt to

appear very problematical. Hospitality has lost so much of its historical character that the whole arrangement savours of a contract for two or three days between host and guest. At a particular time of the year, three or four batches of twenty or thirty men and women succeed one another in the common fashionable country house. It is about such a one that we intend to make a few remarks. Longleat and Hatfield, Montacute and Bramshill, and one or two other historical English houses, are raised above criticism, but the number of buildings with an indefinite quantity of spare bedrooms, to be attributed to neither Elizabethan nor Jacobean architects, is a characteristic of the country to which attention is continually being called. Only let the spare bedrooms be filled, and a foretaste of supreme happiness is secured. Fortunately for the purposes of generalisation, all varieties of houses are comprised in the one word "place"—a magical name, the possession of which is perhaps the most beautiful trait in the character of the ideal son-in-law, and to look after which constitutes the noblest possible profession. A place may be everything or

nothing. It may possess all the charms of scenery and of association; it may on the other hand, and frequently does, consist of an aggregation of grass fields hastily joined together, the position of the ancient hedges being clearly indicated by lines of stunted trees, with a pond, which the tenants call a lake, but which is hardly available even for the purposes of suicide, a lodge, and an assortment of laurels, gravel walks, and iron-gates, commonly called a shrubbery. The building in the centre must be seen to be described. Nothing is more deceptive than the nomenclature of this building. The park has no deer in it. The castle or abbey, to your arrival at which you look forward with much the same sensations as Catherine Morland on her road to Northanger Abbey, is a Gothic stucco or a Grecian temple, which defies criticism and baffles investigation. Montesquieu said that the object with which the French built a "maison des fous" was "pour persuader que ceux qui sont dehors ne le sont pas." Some such motive must have often been at work in the production of the English house. Sometimes it has entered into the head of the owner to be his

own architect, and to emulate the fame of Walpole or Beckford. The original design, striking as it is, is rendered still more so by the tastes of subsequent owners. Successive lunatics have embodied their successive delusions—octagon smoking-rooms, semicircular billiard-rooms, conservatories, porches, turrets in an inextricable confusion, and lastly a chapel, which seems as if it ought to be inside instead of outside the family pew.

> "Thanks, sir," cried I, "'tis very fine.
> But where d'ye sleep, or where d'ye dine?
> I find by all you have been telling,
> That 'tis a house, but not a dwelling."

Different reasons induce different people to accept the invitations which are issued. Some go because it is on their way home from Scotland, some because they have no home; others because Caserta is a show-house, and they imagine that they will see more of it when staying there than when they are under the tutelage of the housekeeper. It is true that the hostess is not equally well informed about her ancestral pictures, or the royalties who have inhabited the spare rooms, but then it must be remem-

bered that she can be got rid of, while to evade the eyes of the housekeeper never entered into the conception of even the British tourist in his wildest moments. We always feel tempted, like Mr Pendennis's friend, to exclaim at last, "And now, madam, will you show us the closet where the skeleton is?" To be thoroughly appreciated, Caserta should be seen when its hostess, for political or provincial reasons, either gives or goes to a ball. Young men are asked by scores. The "dog" is in requisition; we spoke some months since of the difficulty of inducing this interesting creature to perform his assigned part in creation. In order to secure the active services of ten men, at least thirty-five must be invited; and on one occasion an unfortunate hostess, ignorant of these great social satistics, was seen to enter a provincial ball-room at the head of seven girls, destined to demonstrate for once the usefulness of man. It is needless to remark that the ten men and ten women who ultimately arrive, so far from suiting one another, have probably borne a peculiar hatred against each other for past seasons. The *ci-devant* of forty, the unsuc-

cessful author, the fashionable artist, three men who look after their places, and a sprinkling of dogs, perhaps constitute the male elements of the party. A general sense of antagonism prevails; not that it matters much, as the visit does not probably extend over three or four nights, during which time a cultivated man with a good memory may employ his whole faculties in a successful endeavour to recollect the names of the guests. Nothing perhaps is more trying to the nerves than the arrival, and the entry into a half-lit drawing-room, where through the fog can be seen dimly teacups and bonneted women. You search for your hostess in vain, and eventually discuss the dangers of the journey with your host, whom it is needless to say you have never spoken to before. After seeing four relays of women drink tea, the unhappy guest is conducted through innumerable catacombs, up countless stairs, down corridors like the galleries of a coal-pit, to what proves to be somebody else's bedroom. The search continues, and is at last rewarded by success. More troubles may, however, attend him. A neighbouring grandee has been waited for, and

dinner does not take place till half-past eight. It is sad to think that there should be people who care about their dinner; the ancestors restored and varnished look down with proper contempt, saying, "We dined in the middle of the day, but we were nobles: you are a fashionable *bourgeoisie* living in 'a fashionable middle age.'" If the wine is bad a magnificent creature doles it out, and the imagination may dwell with pleasure on the fact that the cold *entrée* first assumed consistency in a mediæval kitchen. In fact, excuses without number present themselves. The rich man labours under many disadvantages in comparison with the owner of five or six thousands a-year. His dining-room is often at a greater distance from his kitchen. An illogical dowager or unreasonable *gourmet* may, notwithstanding, often be seen in a state of painful depression and partial indigestion.

The ball takes place on the following evening. Hostesses declare that they must hold out some attraction, and offer some excuse for the formation of a party. It is cruel to drag a man away from his business or his pleasures in order that he may take part in rational con-

versation, live with agreeable people, or see a beautiful country. He must either shoot away three hundred cartridges each morning, and thus retire to bed with a consciousness of a well-spent day, or he must be taken to a ball. He may congratulate himself if the ball is given in the house at which he is staying, though, should it take place at the county town, he may employ himself to advantage in studying the component parts of the society in which he finds himself. Relics of real feudalism are often to be observed in provincial ball-rooms. There is a privileged end of the room, with privileged seats, where the daughters of the neighbouring baronet and the recently ennobled squire monopolise the fire and recognise the dog. Affectation can go no further. Lady Blarney treats the local authorities with that contempt which they expect, and without which the evening would lose its peculiar zest. Her daughter shows her nicety by stipulating that her *vis-à-vis* should belong to the unlettered classes, and occasionally sits down on the floor with her head on her mother's lap, in order to show the country people that all things are per-

mitted to persons who have spent three months of the year in town. Men in queer coats write their partners' names on queer little cards, and look excited. The wax candles fall fast upon them, and the dust from the floor gradually envelopes them. Odd dances are gone through, in which the monotony of the quadrille is pleasantly broken, and great originality prevails. Happily for everybody, Caserta withdraws its august presence at an early period of the evening, believing, as is no doubt the case, that the servants will enjoy themselves more when they are gone. It is a complete mistake to suppose that county exclusiveness has ceased to exist; in sheltered situations in the midland counties it flourishes to a wonderful extent, and is looked upon as a great bulwark against the inroads of democracy — a word of doubtful import, but supposed to be an attribute of manufacturing plutocrats who may desire to settle in the country, and so become the salvation of mortgaged squires and the replenishers of their spare bedrooms.

To shoot all day, to dance all night, and wear curiously-coloured stockings, will thus

have been the occupation of the typical guest. Even should he share Mr Freeman's views, self-defence will probably drive him into the shooting-party. The alternative is fearful to contemplate. Driven from his bedroom by the housemaids, from the library by the children of the house, the victim loses all presence of mind, and after luncheon is ultimately induced to accept with apparent cordiality the proposition that he should take a walk. Four girls and one chaperon, attended by the victim, whose trembling hands open successive iron gates, pace three times round the pond, or twice up and down the avenue, till cold and muddy he returns to find the same assemblage of women and teacups. A popular delusion exists, or used to exist, that boys and girls were asked to country houses to follow up the acquaintance they had made in London. Where and when men propose to women is indeed a great question, but like all other great questions, such as the destination of pins and dead birds, must remain unsolved. It is not, however, in the midst of the scramble of the fashionable house. If the dog or an elderly dowager is there, the difficul-

ties thrown in the way of even the gentlest flirtation are insuperable. The descent certainly ought to be made a smooth one, instead of which the unhappy couple in question cannot move without incurring the suspicion of the whole party, presumably on account of the rarity of honourable intentions. Did he dance more than twice with her? He did, shrieks a chorus of lynx-eyed mothers with several daughters whose partners have scrupulously observed towards them that etiquette which is the foundation of modern society. Did he cross the room in order to speak to her? Did she say "Good night" to him? Three old women will swear to this fact. She also dropped her fan and gloves twice, and on one occasion walked two hundred yards with him. The indictment is sufficient. Doubt cannot exist, and if the victim has a place, there is not a woman in the house who has not settled what difference it will make to the neighbours. Then the dog goes up to town and his club, and repeats the information; he does not know the date of the battle of Waterloo, but he will remember to his last season the report of a possible engagement.

The party breaks up, as it began, in a general scramble. There are no flys. The six men without servants have shared one another's luggage, and bear the exchange with anything but Christian resignation. Possibly at the last moment they are asked to write their names in a huge volume, and to embody their complaints. Occasionally some strong-minded person has courage to state that the wine is execrable, but, as a rule, indifferent spelling and indifferent grammar combine in praising the hostess. The consequence is that it not unfrequently happens that the guest returns home with the same views for the future which actuated Swift. "Lord Halifax is always teasing me to go down to his country-house, which will cost me a guinea to his servants, and twelve shillings coach-hire; and he shall be hanged first." It is distressing to think, however, that during this period of three days he has been the object of his hostess's consideration, and has caused her much anxiety and trouble. From her point of view his conduct has not been satisfactory. Hospitality has its cares. The dressing-rooms must be refurnished after the nineteenth-

century fashion. Lady Adelaide brought two daughters instead of one. Her Grace remains persistently in bed with a cold. Two men who have allowed her invitations to remain unanswered for more than a week arrive unexpectedly at the last moment, and some man without a vestige of a place clamours for a bath. "Nobody wanted one fifteen years ago," the hostess exclaims piteously, "why can't you go without one for three days? The human body displaces water; this truism you are ignorant of, and have spoilt a new carpet. I buy acres of oilcloth yearly. The stables are full, so are the inns in the village, yet you have brought a servant. My husband was shot in the face this morning, and has lost his temper. I have no doubt you did it. I will never ask you here again."

There is one diversion to which we have not yet referred, but which may be destined to become the chief interest of this decade, and which may be said to unite wit and amusement in a very remarkable manner. It is pleasing to imagine that the spare time of the leisured classes may concentrate itself in it, and that,

when both mind and body are wearied out by the cares of shooting and hunting, they may find relief in practical joking. The pursuit is full of interest. A little friendly horseplay will go far to cement a party: while to put a man into his bath in the middle of the night must be an unfailing source of amusement, enhanced as it may be by a sense of personal danger. Nor are milder witticisms wanting. In proportion to the age and position of the subject will be the entertainment derived. To cut up his hair-brushes, cut off his coat-tails, put animals, dead or alive, into his bed, to hammer his head against the wall, having previously wrapped him in a blanket, are ingenuities which will recommend themselves more and more to men of taste. The stimulus which has of late been given to these pleasing practices may not unnaturally be expected to extend in time to the middle classes. In many games it has often been regretted that there was no room for women. Fortunately here no drawback of that kind exists. Many jokes are feasible by them; they can throw sponges, lock doors, and exhaust their intellects in the formation of booby-traps.

The effect of this on the younger generation cannot be over-estimated. To those who take a gloomy view of the future of the upper classes, and of monarchical institutions, this state of things will be most reassuring, and will occur at once as an argument to be used against those who assert that we have not advanced far beyond the tastes and habits of our ancestors. We please ourselves in our own way. "An Englishman," Emerson says, "wears a wig, or a shawl, or a saddle, or stands on his head, and no remark is made. And as he has been doing this for several generations, it is now in the blood." We are, if not a great, at least an eccentric nation.

The purely hunting house is an interesting type, where the guest who does not hunt occupies the position of a Yahoo among the Houyhnhnms, and a general impression prevails that he is not able to distinguish between the head and the tail of the nobler animal. In the evening a noisy sleep prevails, and the men go through the scenes of the day again,

"Vocesque repente
Mittunt, et crebras redducunt naribus auras;"

while their wives whisper, afraid of disturbing their husbands,

"Donec discussis redeant erroribus ad se."

II.

We had intended to draw a picture of quiet English life, but as no opportunity has been given of observing it during the last month, we are obliged to revert to the phase which we considered in our last article upon this subject. Ball-going and ball-giving have absorbed the energies of the upper classes up to the present moment. Half the houses in any given district have been crammed with parties for the purpose of filling their neighbour's rooms. Flys have been at a premium. Horses are in a state of collapse from repeated journeys to the county town. Torn placards may be seen on every wall, with mutilated lists of the patronesses of the charity ball. Innumerable sisters have occupied the same bedroom; more men with a woman on each arm have appeared in public, and more people have been "deposited by Pro-

vidence in a dry ditch" on their return home, than could ever have been thought possible. Some deep end has doubtless been obtained by this state of things, to be revealed perhaps in the future; in the mean time we can only call attention to its principal features, and formulate the knowledge acquired from the study of them.

It seems a cruel mockery to say that some of the guests at a country-house should be over the age of twenty-one, and that the party would not suffer if a few of their number had even attained the age of thirty. The disappearance of adults from known places of amusement in London has long been a matter of notoriety, but we trusted that two or three years would elapse before this evil communicated itself to the country. The truth, however, can be concealed no longer; the contagion has spread. Infants appeared in flocks throughout the provinces during the late scrambles. A boy who had been re-vaccinated was a phenomenon. Beards of more than a fortnight's growth were rarely to be met with. Hostesses explained and apologies were offered for the presence of the infants. Should, indeed, this condition of things

continue, the Legislature may be expected to interfere. If it is injurious to the health of a boy to send him up a chimney, it is obviously equally so to expose him to the consequences of late hours and hot rooms. The constitutions of the next generation will suffer, and our memories will be justly execrated. Meanwhile some step ought to be taken. A new office should be created, and a nurse of the chambers be considered a necessary part of a well-appointed house. She would be invaluable in depriving the infants of any dangerous weapons on their arrival which they might have brought with them; she would put out their candles at midnight, prevent them from going into the smoking-room, and provide an adequate supply of hoops and wooden spades for their entertainment. We feel convinced that this suggestion will meet with the encouragement it deserves. A special room would be devoted to their use, and much embarrassment avoided. At present an elderly gentleman in the midst of them has the appearance of an owl pursued by a flight of starlings. He migrates uneasily from one room to another, and at last entertains a by no means

unfavourable opinion of Herod. The infants have nothing to do, not even a holiday task, and spend their existence in growing. It is possible that they have been decoyed into the country in order that they may expiate the sins of which they have been guilty in town. An intrepid hostess, starting with the wild fiction that "men don't mind," may do much to induce a belief in this view. Remembering her past wrongs, she overcrowds her house, and consequently her dining-room, and sends an assortment of infants to dine at the inn.

Every improvement that has taken place has added to the trouble of hosts and hostesses, while it may well be doubted whether any progress has taken place in the mental or social qualifications of their guests. There is as much luxury in a country-house as in a model lunatic asylum. A bedroom of this century differs as much from one of the last as that did from its predecessor of the Edwardian era. Arm-chairs, sofas, and writing-tables are now as necessary articles of furniture as a bed; and competition will necessitate the introduction of fresh refinements. It is to be hoped that country-houses

will not lose their old prestige, and that whatever effect the follies of the age may have, they may be powerless in this direction. The extravagant dimensions to which modern shooting has attained (a subject to which we shall presently advert) have much to answer for. If existence indoors is a negative evil merely suffered with a view to stimulate the body for exertion out of doors, a different conception of society must be formed, and the nearest approach to the animal creation be considered the highest ideal. To be "given over to the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air" was a reproach at the beginning of the last century, but it was a reproach which was directed against men who had not the same facilities that exist nowadays for engaging in other pursuits. In fact the classes that Fielding and Steele attacked have probably reached a much higher stage of civilisation, all things considered, than could have been expected. The peerage has gained but little; on the other hand, the country squire has done wonders for himself and his family; he comes to town for six weeks during the season; goes to the Academy and the Opera, and thinks

well of everybody. He no longer confounds "Socinians with poachers," and is as "tame and humane a brute as any in the county." He brings ten people with him to the neighbouring grandee's ball, which he regards as only next in importance to a meeting of justices at the Quarter Sessions. His house is generally not more than two storeys high, and the front hall not only contains, like Sir Roger's, a large otter-skin stuffed with hay, but also a considerable number of things in glass cases, which at some past period of history a lively imagination may suppose to have existed as birds. If half his income were not spent in paying the interest on an old mortgage, he would be a very enviable personage.

The greatest sufferers by any depreciation of country-house life would undoubtedly be women. To them it has been always full of attractions. The mother enjoys a repose there which she cannot find at home. She has no dinner to order, and no servants to scold. The bursting of the water-pipes does not affect her, and she can build at her ease countless castles in the air. She sees her husband obtain the Lord-Lieutenancy and a household appointment, and a succession

of men with the best testimonials apply for the place of son-in-law. Her daughters are equally happy, conscious at the same time that they have numberless opportunities of appearing to the best advantage. An unaffected English girl with good temper and good health, especially if she is the daughter of the house, has the power of showing as much capacity for administration as many Cabinet Ministers. In her hands is the comfort or discomfort of half the guests. She takes care that the infants of both sexes shall go in to dinner together, crumble their bread together, and exhaust their vocabulary of superlatives. Under her influence the dog and the dowager both talk at once to one another. She provides a small room for men with little ingenuities, where they can stand on their heads, "being now perfectly certain they have no brains," ask riddles, and quote acrostics. In the future she will exercise a judicious control over the nurse of the chambers, should the latter be inclined to exceed her powers; in some cases she will strengthen her authority. Under this arrangement the infant will no longer endanger his own life or that of others. The distinguished

foreigner and the infant are out of place wherever there is anything that will go off. They may often be seen looking confused after the involuntary discharge of their weapons. They fire at birds three feet from the ground on undulating land, and make even the beaters nervous. They never remain where they have been placed, and are generally discovered half a mile in advance of the rest of the party, having started in pursuit of a rabbit, which, owing to some strange misconception on their part, they imagine to be wounded. They fire innocuously at intervals, eat a great deal of luncheon, and are always obliged to borrow their neighbour's cartridges. It is unnecessary to say that they are never invited to shoot at battues. It would be as advisable to send the kitchen-maid to kill the ox, instead of employing a butcher for that purpose. Killing is one of the fine arts. We wonder no proposition has been made to provide for the scores of human beings who fell out of work at the end of January, and who must consequently remain unoccupied till the middle of August. Their claims to commiseration are not sufficiently recognised. The

interval is a long one before the chronicle of slaughter is again recorded, and before we can read with renewed interest that at one place three thousand eight hundred and eighty-three head have been killed, and five thousand at another. A fortnight ago the 'Times' informed the public that a select number of persons would be General ——'s guests and "would spend the next few days among the game." The *naïveté* and materialism of this announcement could not be surpassed. It marks a new epoch. Terse euphemisms will become the fashion, dissipate many delusions, and enrich the English language. They will give a death-blow to the vanity of those few ignorant people who imagine that they themselves, and not their game, constitute the inducements which attract guests to their houses. A hunting visit will be termed "going to Lord John's dogs." Some one else "will devote a week to the study of Sir Henry's decanters." It is very fortunate for these poor men who are out of work that the frankness of past critics is not imitated in the discussion of these questions. Sydney Smith went so far as to say, "This honourable company proceeds

with fustian jackets, dog-whistles, and chemical inventions, to a solemn destruction—how is the country benefited by them?" This is very rude; no such questions are asked now. On the contrary, we acquiesce cheerfully, and are urged to believe that many evils are avoided by this "procession," such as wife-beating, for which much leisure might otherwise be found. Sydney Smith forgot also that rational conversation is promoted. It is wholly impossible for a man who has shot two hundred pheasants to give a detailed account of the death of each. There is sure to be a sufficient similarity in each individual case to make the operation a hazardous one. Thus the conversation has many lucid intervals, which cannot be predicated of the hunting party. The philanthropist who could devise a compulsory scheme by which fox and hounds always ran over the same ground, like the chase in 'Theodore and Honoria,' would deserve well of his fellow-creatures. The system as it exists at present unhappily affords fresh matter for discussion on each successive occasion; and egotism has established itself so

firmly, that a hunting man would think it as reasonable that he should be expected to remember the information he heard at school as to abstain from comments on the run of the day. The hunting, however, of one generation is not unlike the hunting of another, while the character of shooting has been revolutionised of late. Addison would hardly say now "that the sport is more agreeable where the game is the harder to come at." If La Bruyère were alive now he would devote pages to the delineation of the man who enjoys the reputation of being in the first rank of his profession. He is a social power, and though proficiency in shooting is very different from what it was twenty years ago, and the average standard far higher, yet the number of this particular class is very limited. When five or six thousand head are to be killed during the week he is in demand. He may be seen most frequently at some station where there are many cross-roads. At Crewe or Peterborough or York his habits may be observed. He travels about with wonderful cases containing thousands of cartridges, and would be a god-

send in any beleaguered city. He has a somewhat serious expression, and is a little deaf of the right ear. Keepers become excited at the mention of his name. The number of partridges or grouse which he has killed in a single drive is handed down to posterity by enthusiastic admirers. In the Universal Republic, or even sooner, he will shoot with a mitrailleur, and be deaf of both ears. On his death a grateful country, in this age of testimonials, will erect a stained window to his memory, portraying the exploits of St Hubert. There is every reason to believe that a further advance in the science of slaughter will take place. The combats of terriers and rats may be successfully imitated. Emulous sportsmen will back themselves to shoot an incredible number of rabbits within the hour, amidst the plaudits of an admiring crowd, and a new phase in the history of the country will be reached, upon which foreign nations will turn an envious eye. International abattoirs will be established, and England will once more occupy her old position.

With such a prospect as this before them, it

must be a matter of wonder that there should be men who cavil at the system. They go so far as to assert that if country-houses are to remain what they were, or if the object of society is any longer to be mutual pleasure, no one amusement or occupation must be allowed to stand out in relief to the exclusion of all others; that the trade of a butcher ought not to be considered the chief aim of a large number of the leisured classes, and the preservation of game a nobler object than the improvement of agriculture. The votaries of field sports have a strong position, and the moderate enjoyment of them is allowed by a vast majority of people to be a useful indulgence and a rational relaxation; the discredit, however, which is attaching to their abuse may go far to endanger their very existence. The influence of the upper classes depends very much upon the life they lead in the country, and anything which brings their life into disrepute depreciates their position also. The reputation for sanity possessed by men who have more than £5000 a-year to spend, though great, must not be diminished. Much is con-

ceded to them by the Legislature—even sixty pairs of boot-trees, if we rightly remember the late Mr Windham's tastes. Whatever tends to diminish the number of guests in any country-house is an evil. Hospitality constitutes the best check upon English eccentricity and selfishness, enables men to cultivate the habits of courtesy and self-denial, and sometimes to forget themselves for ten consecutive minutes. Without a periodical influx of guests, an Englishman's house would not only be his castle, but also his lunatic asylum. Such are some of the extreme views put forward by persons who ought to know better. The worshippers of *strenua inertia* may rejoice, however, that their application cannot be tested at present. Birds and beasts are enjoying tranquillity. The keeper is counting up his money. Cinderella is dreaming of her prince, while her two sisters are considering how they can keep her upstairs during the ensuing season. The country-house is given up as a prey to brown holland, rolled-up carpets, and the housekeeper, while creeping things come out of the corners, defying the au-

thority of a single housemaid, and look at what Horace Walpole called "bushels of deplorable earls and countesses." The county ball-room, lately so resplendent in pink calico, is again— saddest metamorphosis of all — the resort of scientific lecturers; the fly alone is unchanged; it was and remains a pumpkin.

MOHOCKS AND THEIR LITERATURE.

THE faculty of destructiveness has always had a select number of proficients to boast of. Its votaries at various periods of our history have amused themselves in various ways, though two main objects may be said to have principally engaged their attention—namely, injury to the person, and destruction of property. These two pursuits have been for centuries among the accompaniments of leisure, and have often been considered the characteristics of the fine gentleman. Constant references may be found in the pages of contemporaneous writers to those who excelled in them and to those who suffered from them; and some of these we now purpose to rescue from oblivion. Those gentlemen who

still look back with fond memories to the time when such pursuits were the rule and not the exception, will be grateful to us for such an epitome of their ancestors' exploits as shall furnish them with fresh emulation and spur them on to further efforts. There may be amongst them one or two who, though familiar with Macaulay's quotations, are yet ignorant that they have a sacred bard in Mr Thomas Shadwell, who devoted some very forcible language to their forefathers' attainments in the latter half of the seventeenth century. One of his plays, entitled the *Scowrers*, relates in the language of the period the achievements of those who were known by that appellation, and whose claims to respect were based upon the success of their practical jokes. Their career is conceived by some to have commenced in the reign of James I., but there could be no difficulty in tracing their antiquity as far back as that epoch, when by a singular coincidence the founders of all our families suddenly emerged from obscurity. Not only are the heroes in Mr Shadwell's play "scowrers," but they also inspire others with a desire to imitate their example. One of

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these followers, in paying his addresses to the heroine, assures her, as a claim to consideration, that he is all frolic, and asks her how many knockers of doors she thinks he has at home which he twisted off when he scowred? She not unnaturally declines to hazard an opinion. Whereupon he states that he has two hundred, and adds that he has just "beaten twenty-higgling women, spread their butter about the kennel, broken all their eggs, let their sucking-pigs loose, scowred like lightning, and kicked fellows like thunder." In spite of these interesting feats, and of her admission that he is a mad fellow, the heroine has the courage to refuse him. There is great definiteness in this most valuable description, and the student of this department of knowledge may gain more information from the works of this "hasty" author.

In the beginning of 1712 Swift was reduced to a state of mind which is quite pitiable. His thoughts are always wandering to the Mohocks and their practices, and are recorded in every paragraph of his journal. He hears fearful stories about them; they "play the devil about

the town every night, they slit people's noses," and run chairs through with swords. Of course they are all Whigs, and even number in their ranks the son of a bishop. He has been especially warned against them, so when he walks in the park he comes home early to avoid them, and complains bitterly that he has been put to the charge of some shillings already, as he is obliged to go in a chair. He hears still more alarming stories; two of them "caught a maid of old Lady Winchilsea's at the door of their house, cut all her face, and beat her without any provocation." A proclamation was consequently issued, and Swift's terror reaches its climax. "One night he staid with Prior till past twelve, could not get a coach, was alone, and was afraid enough of the Mohocks;" though he got home safe, he is determined to do so no more. A little later in the month he says they are vanished, but adds that he shall take care of his person. In his history of the last four years of Queen Anne, he revenges himself by charging Prince Eugene with having hired Mohocks to assassinate Harley. These gentlemen seem to have excited considerable

interest at the time. Steele devoted two papers in the 'Spectator' to their proceedings, in one of which he states that an outrageous ambition of doing all possible hurt to their fellow-creatures was the great cement of their assembly, and the only qualification required in the members; they took care to drink themselves to a pitch, make a general sally, and attack all that were so unfortunate as to walk the streets which they patrolled; some were knocked down, others stabbed, others cut and carbonadoed. Any one who wishes to pursue his inquiries into this subject may turn to Wycherley, Oldham, Gay, Vanbrugh, and many of their contemporaries, from whom he may accurately gather the habits and the language of the Lord Rakes and Colonel Bullys of the age. We shall forbear from any further quotations, since we fear that the monotony of treatment which is perceptible in these proceedings may detract from the interest which they otherwise would naturally excite. These, however, seem to have been the golden days of practical joking, when "the night was employed against the public enemy," and all professions were equally repre-

sented. Since that period a gentle decline has made itself manifest,—the change, in fact, from bear-baiting to pigeon-shooting. Lord Rake's mind is still a seventeenth-century mind, but the exigencies of the age require his animal spirits to display themselves in the milder amusement of the destruction of hair-brushes, instead of in the mutilation of his neighbours. Lord Chesterfield, who held the oddest ideas on the subject of good breeding, and laid down as a rule that the fine gentleman should neither laugh nor walk as if he was in a hurry, entertained strong opinions about "horseplay or jeux des mains." "Nothing is more contrary to *les bienséances*, and it has often very serious, sometimes very fatal consequences; romping, struggling, throwing stones at one another's heads, are the becoming pleasantriés of the mob, but degrade a gentleman. *Giuoco di mano, giuoco di villano*, is a very true saying among the very few true sayings of the Italians." From which remarks we may confidently assume that Philip Stanhope was an eminent practical joker, though even without them we might be led to draw the same conclusion from all that is known of the

life of that hopeful creature. It is difficult to say at what period these forms of amusement lost their violent character. The rape of door-knockers continued far into this century, and an octogenarian may occasionally still be found willing to recount the exploits of his youth; bullying in its grosser forms was relegated by degrees to the army, in which it long preserved a distinctive character; but the practices which were in vogue thirty years. ago, even in the Guards, and which will be easily recalled by many without our dwelling upon the subject, have long since died away, and at present a few cavalry regiments alone retain with Christ Church the proud distinction of adhering to the customs of the seventeenth century. Isolated cases have at long intervals enriched the records of the police courts, but no enterprises of great pith or moment have been undertaken which could stamp the present generation with originality of thought. Indeed strange innovations have crept in, and it is now thought necessary to make excuses for any wilful destruction of property. There may have been extenuating circumstances, but they must be stated. It was

very generally reported, and also very properly, that the perpetrators of what was called by the mob "the Christ Church outrage" only acted as they did through ignorance of the effect which fire had upon marble. A little more education, and the destruction of the college property would have been avoided. It might perhaps be worth while in future to make the action of fire, and the consequences resulting from it, a part of a boy's matriculation, should the Dean not be averse to check such ebullitions of animal spirits. From the state in which we once saw some of the windows in that seat of learning, it may be inferred that the qualities of the Nickers, "gentlemen who delighted to break windows with halfpence," have been transmitted to their descendants.

When education, however, becomes general, many buried truths will come to the surface besides the knowledge of the effects of fire, such as that the historical buildings and monuments of the country possess more than a mere monetary value, and that it is the duty of the class which owns them to preserve them from decay. It would be easy to show a sense of the obliga-

tion thus conferred, and to permit any man who employed a fraction of his income in such a manner to throw a stone at the Guards' Memorial whenever he passed it, and paint a bishop's door red every alternate Session. Vandalism is nearly related to Mohockism, and both are to be ascribed to the same cause. A little more knowledge, and astounding results might be produced; a knowledge of art might become even fashionable, and statues might convey some impression to the mind besides that of stolid admiration at so hard a substance as marble being capable of so much indentation. The problem now is how to make the best of contented ignorance. The subject is one which is very difficult to deal with. The verdict of society depends greatly upon the position of offenders, and no one has ever ventured to fix the degree of intelligence required in a man of leisure, or the standard he must necessarily reach. More is expected from a borough member than from a county member, more again from the county member than from a peer; while the exclusive possession of any absurdity, commonly called a hobby, such as the geography of

the Rocky Mountains or the supply of the South Sea Islanders with knickerbockers, is quite enough to redeem the completest ignorance upon all other subjects, and obtain for its owner the character of being a practical man. Mrs Hardcastle in "She Stoops to Conquer," after her son had shown a great deal of spirit, and her husband had gently remonstrated with her, enunciated a great truth and spoke the prevailing opinion upon the subject when she said, "I don't think a boy wants much learning to spend £1500 a-year." This is one of the few acts which the great majority of human beings are able to perform by nature, and we may venture to believe that no additional difficulty is presented by the increase of the sum. The arguments in defence of practical joking are somewhat analogous; it is sometimes justified on the ground that it is to the idiot precisely what satire is to the educated man, and that recognised stupidity cannot show its sense of humour or of resentment in any other way. Possibly this may be the case; we have no doubt that a dog, owing to his inability to express himself by swearing, resorts to biting; but there are few people who would allow him

to adopt this species of satire a second time. Yet it is a pity that the inventive mind which delights in the sadly degenerate jokes of the present day should not be usefully employed for the good of the nation. The time may come when a country-house may be thought to offer too circumscribed a field, yet public opinion may be still ungenerous and unkind. This gloomy prospect might be avoided by a migration to Ireland, where the talents of our modern scowrers might find a wider scope, and where they might escape from the coldness and disapprobation of unsympathising men. A Club for the promotion of their principles might be formed, of which Mr Porter should be the Head-Centre, and one of our Universities might supply an English correspondent, with instructions to telegraph any ingenious discoveries which his college should have brought into practice. The Government would naturally lend them a willing aid; many measures have been attempted for the repression of Fenianism and have failed, but a few practical jokes, under the immediate supervision of the President, would probably constitute the one panacea in vain sought for

hitherto. It is possible to conceive a general emigration of the inhabitants as one of the consequences likely to ensue. A small subscription would be sufficient to form a small library, in which the whole of Lever's works and an expurgated copy of Shadwell would find a place; the study of these volumes, added to the natural ability of the members, would enable them to open the campaign with vigour, while the abolition of army purchase might drive a few valuable recruits into their ranks.

We feel that we have not treated this subject in a manner commensurate with its importance, and that we have left many authorities unquoted, many anecdotes untold, and many points untouched. Perhaps we have underrated the temptation to bully Calandrino, "uomo semplice e di nuovi costumi;" perhaps many men have struggled against the influence of tastes transmitted to them hereditarily, and could tell of noble instances of self-denial when almost irresistibly impelled to convert a statue into a torso or to wrench off a mediæval knocker. Fielding in his "Journey to the Next World," stations Minos at the gate of Elysium, and

represents the spirits recounting their good deeds to him in their endeavours to gain an entrance. We may fancy some future spirit saying, "I used to stay often in country-houses; Buffalmacco and Bruno were always bullying Calandrino, yet I never broke his windows, never put sponges into his bed, or destroyed his furniture; my father collected a fine gallery of works of art, and a valuable library, yet they remain even to this day uninjured and unburnt." Minos, convinced, will reply, "You lived in the nineteenth century, and in what you thought was the best society; great allowances are to be made for you; you employed your time harmlessly; you had nothing to do but 'put on and pull off your shoes and stockings twice a-day, yet you did not hang yourself for weariness.' You can go in."

PLATO IN PETTICOATS.

OUR heading represents the climax of abuse reached by a character in one of Farquhar's plays, who appears to have been frightened out of his senses by what he evidently conceived to be a superior woman, though her subsequent assertion that "books sour our temper, spoil our eyes, and ruin our complexions" may suggest a doubt as to the fitness of the language employed in describing her. It would be interesting to know whether this scene occurred in Lent, for it is during this season that the session of bluestockings is held, and that the human being who for some unexplained reason chooses to wear petticoats rages uncontrolled, nightly addresses constituents and non-constituents, and spreads a thirst for information to genera-

tions yet unborn. To Lent she belongs, and in fact she is one of the mortifications incident to that season. There are some who complain that we have deteriorated in its observance. It is true that it is no longer thought necessary to make an excuse for going to a ball, that there is no more fasting than is implied in the fact that a second course must depend upon quails and guinea-fowls alone, and that more marriages take place proportionally than was the case formerly. But, on the other hand, there are several circumstances calculated to fill us with hope, and to calm the apprehensions of those who would make capital from such avowals as these. The 'Spectator' was "in hand" a short time ago at a fashionable club, several women have partially covered their bodies—though it is darkly hinted that this innovation may be due to the recent prevalence of vaccination—and two men have expressed a wish to go to a political reception. Such signs of the times are not to be lightly passed over, even if we could not triumphantly point to the immunity from personal restraint which the superior woman enjoys and abuses. For forty days she success-

fully contends with fashion; at her shrine are offered up countless numbers of crude theories and undigested ideas, objects of art are displayed before her, and scientific experiments are made for her amusement. She is never more at home than in the lecture-room: "a pretty place; there saw a great many chymical glasses and things, but understood none of them." The modesty which led Pepys to make this entry in his diary would of course now be unjustifiable. A bad atmosphere, penitential benches, and forbidding smells are sometimes characteristics of the "pretty place," but they act only as stimulants while the devotee compiles a weighty abstract by the help of a note-book and spectacles, which if it perplexes her own mind, at least adds a new terror to the dinner-table. Here, like a donkey of an evil disposition, her neighbour may hang down his ears, and patiently submit to his fate. Flight is impossible, while no man could reasonably hope to indulge in a struggle with success. Plato and Copernicus, Leibnitz and Aristotle, are propounded at a moment when the future of the digestion is at stake, and the lightest

topics are indispensable. At such a time a man's ignorance is particularly likely to be displayed; just as a character in a French play, on being asked the name of a bird, could only remark that "it flew when it was alive," so the average intelligence of the ordinary diner-out, with regard to the eminent names we have quoted, amounts to an impression that they wrote when they were alive. But what is this to fling in the face of a rampant middle-aged woman whom the acquisition of facts has roused to frenzy? Even were this seemingly safe assertion hazarded, a prompt contradiction would follow; the best line of conduct to pursue is to take refuge in impenetrable stupidity, perhaps even openly to prefer Shakespeare to Rossetti, and thus, incurring unequivocal contempt, be left in peace. After dinner, the scientific ogress will pounce upon the timid savant, carry him off to some distant sofa, where, heedless of his imploring cries, his chattering teeth, and nervous agitation of his hands, she can pick his brains at leisure, and secure him for her next dinner-party.

It is said of a famous bluestocking of this

century that she took no interest in any woman who had neither run away from her husband nor had any complaint to make against him, and that any deviation from the ordinary rules of conduct was to her a recommendation rather than otherwise; while her mode of life was accurately summed up by the statement of a wit, that she got up every morning at five o'clock to misinform herself. Her modern representative does not trouble herself much about the relations between the two sexes; she believes that marriage is the English habit of legalising an increase of the population, and dress a covering of the body which the climate and the loss of a furry protection render necessary. No one would venture to express an opinion as to her having loved in vain, or at all. No one would venture to embrace her even *pour l'amour du Grec.* To use a beautiful simile of Colonel Hanger's, a man might just as well put his arm round an oak-tree with the bark on. She bristles with abnormal angles, which may or may not be caused by what she calls her dress. Yet in spite of her strong mind she is credulous; all depends upon the channel through which

the information comes. Let a professor state that the pig-faced lady is part of his system, or that still more ancient phenomenon who gave birth to something which resembled a dormouse and disappeared after running three times round the room, and she will obediently accept as truths these slight eccentricities of nature; besides which, something must take the place of Balaam's ass. Has not an eminent philosopher lately declared that there "is an increasing number of persons in the world who do not base their theories of life upon the great ideas which have long prevailed?" One of these great ideas was to the effect that no subject presented a more valuable field for study than the classical literature of a nation. Forty years ago the masterpieces of English writers of the last century were household words; now, the superior woman of forty-five is hardly aware of their existence. On the other hand, it is true, she knows that she has a deltoid, that eating and drinking sustain life, and she probably can tell the exact distance of the sun from the Royal Institution as corrected down to latest date.

"Nulle science n'est pour elles trop profonde,
Et céans, beaucoup plus qu'en aucun lieu du monde :
Les secrets les plus hauts s'y laissent concevoir,
Et l'on sait tout chez moi, hors ce qu'il faut savoir.
On y sait comment vont lune, étoile polaire,
Vénus, Saturne et Mars, dont je n'ai point affaire."

On these topics she shrieks, and scolds, and splutters. It was said, in terms which we abstain from reproducing, that Voltaire gave the French a very good substitute for the Christian religion. The class of whom we are speaking are tied to no definite exponent of morality. Their religious tendencies are undergoing a constant change; they are Calvinists, ritualists, and freethinkers in turn; now they may be seen listening to a sermon on the physiological aspects of marriage; now to a discourse on the vanity of dress; now to a recital of the inconsistencies and plagiarisms of which Christianity has been guilty. It may be that the cause of this is to be found in the fact that the education of women is still in its infancy. It is not very long since the object aimed at was the concealment of knowledge, and at present a sort of astonishment is often manifested by women at their own acquirements. It is so strange a

feeling that it must be imparted to others; *mon âne parle, et même il parle bien.* In a few years we shall probably have changed all this; the stage of ostentation, as Montaigne called it, will have been passed, and woman will be expected to know as much, and to display their knowledge as little, as men. The mere fact that no special name has been invented for her shows the general distribution of the belectured woman. Bluestocking is an extinct word, and the epithet strong-minded conveys no very distinct impression.

In the mean time the blue sock, if we may use such an expression to denote the infant of tender years who joins in the general movement, has much to complain of. She is the antithesis of the girl who spends five nights out of seven in dancing until four in the morning, and, as such, she deserves credit. When marriage was supposed to be the natural conclusion of four years' dancing, education might be postponed; but now, when the supply of princes is so limited and the demands of women are no less exorbitant than ever, it is as well that the cultivation of the mind should not wait upon

the remote possibility of being carried away in a coach drawn by eight horses. The girl who wishes to make a collection of scientific or historical facts requires encouragement; they are far better than either monograms or beetles. As it is, she is half afraid of a date even when it is right, and when she has called it up into existence, regards it in much the same light as the unfortunate youth did the devil, whom he had raised without any definite idea as to his employment. Patronised by the prig at dinner, when she happens to be invited to one, and relegated to the schoolboy in the evening, whose mind reverts to the athletic sports at every pause of the interchange of monosyllables, she is far more sinned against than sinning. The path of knowledge is a very hard one, and it requires considerable strength of mind to disregard the latent opinion of the social Arnolphes who still believe that the whole duty of a girl is *savoir prier Dieu, m'aimer, coudre, et filer.* She has her Scylla and Charybdis to avoid. It seems almost impossible to escape falling into the extreme of either vapid chaff or hopeless nineteenth-century priggishness. The disciples

of the man who wrote in his diary "Lost a quarter of an hour to-day" are daily increasing in numbers; they have formed an offensive and defensive alliance with the strong-minded woman; these co-descendants of the Catarhine monkeys have kissed each other—metaphorically that is to say, in order that we may not be supposed to contradict our former assertion. The generation of prigs which we are nourishing is in possession of many social platforms, and will shortly celebrate with due pomp, and of course a public dinner, the extinction of humour as a consequence of their unflagging efforts. It is one thing to be frivolous, and another thing to give tongue to the information supposed to have been acquired during the morning's work. After a long smell at a blue-book or a pamphlet on School Boards, the prig goes out fortified for the labours of the day, and gathers information with bee-like assiduity and a painful pertinacity. If he meets a man with one eye, his only object is to discover the exact sensations attendant upon that condition, believing that the pursuit of knowledge is under

all circumstances justifiable; he will babble Communism, or prate of Church and State in a feeble voice, as his politics may lead him, perhaps even unbend to a discussion on the Poor-laws. At times he educates a prigling, for he has a noble end in view, and it is quite possible that in the Census paper of 1881 Prig will be as distinct a classification as Lunatic or Idiot. He cannot, however, hope to transmit his qualities by inheritance; from rejection and other causes, he is not able to choose the most beautiful and healthy women, so that we may confidently trust that no children will be born capable of asking questions immediately after birth, and consequently of contradicting those from whom they receive the answers. It is from the Universities and the House of Commons that the supply must come. Cambridge, which for a long time was behindhand, is now emulating Oxford in their production, and the prospect of a November Session is one which may fill the prig's mind with joy. The proceedings of the House of Commons are curiously dull, but what are they when compared with an

account of them given after dinner by a well-meaning legislator, whose accent is probably provincial, and whose countenance you instinctively distrust? The prig's career during the remainder of the year can easily be sketched. In August he rises and goes abroad, in order to make in some foreign country the remarks which may have passed unheeded in his own; he returns with two numbers of the 'Nuova Antologia,' which his knowledge of the language has enabled him to cut open, and he enjoys the satisfaction of stating his opinion on the financial state of the country without fear of contradiction. Much might be forgiven him could it be proved to his face that he had ever been in love, but the nearest approach to a flirtation which he is known to have indulged in, the only occasion on which he ever compromised himself, was when he once lent a volume of Herbert Spencer's 'Social Statics.' It is needless to say that he was immediately asked what his intentions were. Very different, however, is the fate which attends the female who has been on the rampage during Lent; she succumbs

to the season, her progress is over, and after Easter her occupation is gone. How she spends her time then is a dark mystery; perhaps it is employed in filing the papers on the Contagious Diseases Acts which have been sent to her, or in losing and recovering her eleventh dog, or perhaps in considering what dress she should wear during the ensuing year. Nothing would surprise us, not even if it were announced that she was the responsible manager of the 'Matrimonial News,' or that she supplied a fashionable journal with those curious paragraphs which are inserted in order that their contradiction may fill some blank space in a succeeding number. It is credibly reported that, at the expiration of the season, she travels on the Rhine, a terror to guides and waiters, gradually merging her individuality in that of the *dame seule*, a position which renders her still more antagonistic and ferocious to unprotected men whose canine teeth have unfortunately forgotten their original cunning. Where her chrysalis lies hid in winter is a matter which can only be vaguely conjectured; it may be in the diving-bell at the

Polytechnic; this, however, is mere speculation, and we only suggest it for the sake of those who are inclined to study her habits more closely. Let the knowledge at present suffice that to Lent she belongs, and in Lent appears — *nec scire fas est omnia.*

THE RETURN OF THE TOURISTS.

If we are not the most cultivated and æsthetic people in the world, it is certainly not for want of travelling. Hordes of barbarians have been arriving daily among us from the South of Europe in obedience to the law which requires them to spend in town the three months of the season. Many persons, no doubt, are under the impression that Italy belongs to the Italians, and that the language spoken there is Italian. A visit to that country during the past spring would have speedily undeceived them. At Turin or Bologna the traveller might have imagined himself to be at Swindon or Peterborough; the scene is one of wild confusion; troops of English and Americans precipitate themselves upon the trains, careless of the claims

of previous occupants; hats they sit upon, coats they displace, umbrellas they ignore. Italians, conscious of their strange and *dépaysé* appearance, shrink into the background. The timid traveller wishes for annihilation as he hears a group of six Americans, all under twenty-five years of age, and all apparently unconnected by any ties of relationship, asseverating that "now is the time to make a rush." Daughters flit to and fro in dusty dresses. Fathers hurry forwards and backwards, struggling with bundles containing a stick for every day in the month, the waifs and strays from which would enable them to be traced from city to city. Newly-married couples clinging to each other's hands and their travelling-bags, dropping first one and then the other, are trying to find their courier, who is trying to find them. The refreshment-room is full to overflowing, and the Northern tribes gaze with avidity and astonishment at a sight for which their own wildernesses have so little prepared them. The officials, taught by experience that they have no business on the scene, placidly look on, sometimes muttering unintelligible words in a language in which they are never

addressed, and which no one professes to understand. Temporary companionship with these excited hosts does not explain the cause of their migrations. Their appetites are superb, so that health cannot be the object in view. Art can have but little to do with it, for they can only just distinguish brick from stone. It may possibly be a natural thirst for information, for in one corner of the carriage an Englishman is asking what the Apennines are, and whether the inhabitants have been engaged in any war during the last twenty years, which gives rise to much interesting speculation. In another corner a girl is reading Baedeker aloud, not with great rapidity, as a succession of twenty-eight tunnels interrupts the enunciation of as many words. All these heterogeneous elements find themselves at the close of the day in the same hotel, an hotel which they have called into existence, and which, were it not quite insupportable, would deserve the praises lavished upon it. All kinds of conveniences abound; electric bells which ring a quarter of an hour after they are desired, and indulge in spontaneous vagaries in the dead of night; servants who, in their wish

to perfect themselves in the pronunciation of the English language, refuse to speak their own and are wholly incomprehensible. The court-yard is a den of omnibuses from which discordant sounds are ever rising; every half-hour fresh loads arrive, disgorging more barbarians and brass-bound trunks, which become more involved in inextricable confusion; the family courier is explaining that nine packages are to be taken upstairs, and seven left below, and spends the rest of the evening in ineffectual attempts to sort the sixteen. The hotel is "famed for its good *table-d'hôte*," and eighty greedy persons give up in consequence the seclusion of their own rooms to sit in the gilded barn where dinner is served. The object is to get rid of the unwary guests in as short a time as possible, and the foolish conversationalist may easily find himself three dishes in arrear, causing no inconsiderable detriment to his digestion in endeavouring to hurry through a cold Mediterranean fish, a hash of brains, and mutton that is not mutton, in the five minutes which are allowed him. How many ruined constitutions may not accuse the master "of a recently

enlarged and re-decorated hotel!" Nor is the night a time for repose; there is an early train at half-past four o'clock, and two Englishmen at three begin to splash about in their portable baths, while the waiter has roused every occupant of the same storey from forgetfulness of the numbers of those who were going. The next day brings round the same cycle of pleasures, and the same struggles, until Florence has caught a violent cold, and the Chianti has disagreed with her father, so that they are obliged to remain two nights in some town which deserves the careful study of two months.

The opening of the Mont Cenis Tunnel has effected a revolution; four or five days is a long time to give to a journey from London to Rome, and there is enough English atmosphere in the latter town to make one doubt the truth of Horace's dictum. "Rome est la ville où l'on aime. Quand on a une passion, c'est là qu'il faut aller en jouir; on a les arts et Dieu pour complices," wrote one of Balzac's heroines. Could the modern Englishman be forced to soliloquise in the palace of the Cæsars, and explain his reasons for being there, they would

probably be of the following nature :—"I came here because I was told I should find all the advantages of an English watering-place, and my country neighbours were going too. I belong to a club where I can discuss the Tichborne case and receive my opinions from my own newspaper. I keep my digestion in order by hunting three days in the week, and if I do not jump over stone walls, at least I do not ride over the hounds. Marsala is very like sherry, much cheaper, and is certainly stronger than I thought it was. My wife and daughters like seeing churches, and I think sculpture very interesting. I have seen sixteen studios, and shall try to get to the Vatican before I go to Naples." At times, however, he looks sadly depressed. The tropical rain which set in the morning after his arrival goes on for three days without any intermission; the Pincian is reduced to a muddy pulp, the streets are turned into torrents, and only a few archæologists can be seen on their way to investigate the fifteen churches one under the other at San Clemente. Perhaps it snows or hails, and the traveller may listen to the asseverations of the Italians that

such an occurrence has not taken place for forty years; and if it is his first experience of the climate, he may possibly believe them. The Club is damp, and dismal stories are told him. Some fragment of a Columbarium has resented the intrusion of hounds and horses, and an enthusiastic sportsman has broken his collar-bone in full view of the Alban hills. Some one else has been robbed in the Campagna, and four others seized with fever. Of course it was their own fault; what so easy to avoid? You have only to wear precisely the right clothes during every change of temperature, never catch a chill, never expose yourself needlessly to the sun, observe careful rules with regard to diet, obtain excellent rooms on the second floor looking to the south, never be out at sunset, and never get wet; these simple precautions, with the aid of a strong constitution, will enable the traveller to preserve his health at Rome. Full of these and similar details the father creeps in fear and trembling to his hotel, where he finds his wife anxious to know who is the best chemist and who is the best doctor, in case Florence's cold should become worse. They have stood for

hours in damp vaults in thin boots; nothing will warm the dingy rooms looking northwards on to a bank of earth about five yards from the windows. Even these cellars were found with the greatest difficulty, and there is no prospect of obtaining better. Crowds pour in every day, filling every available garret, driving from hotel to hotel in search of a bed, not unfrequently in vain. The watering-place increases its prices, and pillages its visitors. A modern capital is a charming thing, and the adjuncts of a Court and diplomatic establishments are not without a certain value; but they kill mediævalism as they bring their boulevards with them. The new street is necessary, is doubtless an improvement, as it destroys the tortuous alleys and decaying buildings; but in its progress it pulls down here a campanile, there a window of the fourteenth century. The sound Libéral who is awakened in the morning by the shrieks of newspaper vendors and by the groans of barrel-organs—for Italy, so prodigal of her favours in this respect to other countries, still keeps a sufficient supply at home—may for a moment regret the consummation of Italian unity, and

remember the days when all such noises were forbidden. While one Serene Highness drives by him on the right hand, and another on the left, he may wish to recall the time when the city was not quite so fashionable; when the poor could economise there; when, if the dinners were as bad, and the beef as tough, there were many pleasant people to eat them; and when the gardens of the Ludovisi were not closed—a loss no less irreparable to students of nature than of art. On the other hand, scores of new shops are opened, displaying an endless choice of photographs and mosaics, countless boxes of which are despatched to New York. The influx of ignorant travellers has given rise to renewed activity in the fabrication of works of art, and an unparalleled sale of rubbish has been the consequence. *Hæ tibi erunt artes!* All sorts of objects are kept in stock to tempt the amateur, who has not even sense enough to observe that the picture might have been better had the painter taken more pains.

The American is a better prey than the Englishman, who generally possesses at home a select assortment of relics of travel. Most

country-houses present some indication of Italian tours in the shape of copies, alabaster figures, or marble tables, the collection of some erratic grandfather, who however probably saw more and understood far more of Italy than any of his descendants. He went to Rome for four or five months, not for a fortnight; felt that he was in a strange country; inquired solemnly into the habits of the natives, their customs, and their mode of life; made abstracts of the conversations he held; wrote long accounts after the manner inculcated by Bacon; perhaps did "sequester himselfe from the company of his countrymen, and diet in such places where there is good company of the nation where he travaileth; did upon his removes from one place to another procure recommendation to some person of quality residing in the place whither he removeth." These accounts were published on his return, and were very likely read with interest by the untravelled world. Now hardly anybody takes letters of introduction to foreigners, few of whom indeed speak English with fluency. If the guest is conversant with no

language but his own, it may be doubted whether he derives much pleasure from climbing up the hundred steps of some vast palace to find a society which has no characteristics of its own, and whose gossip is singularly like that of any other watering-place. Besides, when Bacon wrote, and our ancestors printed their letters, neither Murray nor Baedeker had published their admirable summaries, and they could have little foreseen the day when Englishmen and Englishwomen, by the aid of a courier, would be enabled to see Florence in three days, Bologna in two, and Ferrara in a single morning. Then the hours were not mapped out for them with a stern hand, and they gave perhaps one or two to the study of what was in those times the prevalent language of the country. Travellers are much too busy in these days to do anything of the kind; besides, what would be the use? The waiters speak American wherever they go; there is no modern literature to read, and as for the classics, Tasso is too dull, Dante too difficult, Ariosto too long, Boccaccio too improper. The result is that not more than one Englishman out

of a hundred displays a greater familiarity with the language than is evinced by the question "Quanto?" which he pronounces as he stretches across the buffet and shakes a *brioche* in the face of the alarmed waiter. Were he to stay in a town two days longer than was necessary to see its churches, he would feel that he was wasting his time. Perpetual motion is his destiny. He would be more likely to sleep at Tuxford on his way to Edinburgh than to break his journey at an Italian town where there was no English chemist. Balzac's heroine would hardly find a quiet corner in which she could pursue her studies. "I can't abide Venice, there's no noise nor bustle here," was the criticism of one to whom the avenues of New York presented the acme of enjoyment. Rome will become more crowded and more expensive each succeeding year, and fewer salons will remain open to those who come in search of society. When the dual government which now exists comes to an end, the resident English will be at a loss for topics of conversation, and will be deprived of the opportunity of committing many harmless indis-

cretions in opposition to the Government of the country, by which they show their interest in politics, even if they do not directly influence the proceedings at the Quirinal.

Travelling of the kind we have described cannot be said to promote a knowledge of the arts or to aid the critical faculty. The family which has seen Bologna in two days, and other towns with similar celerity, returns to England with minds which resemble blurred photographs, and health impaired by the most treacherous of climates. Italy and its enjoyments are for those who leave the beaten track, who content themselves with the spectral hunt in the pine woods of Ravenna, and who learn from the mosaics in San Vitale and San Apollinare how lovely and how simple was the Christianity of the sixth century. Along the Eastern coast they may enjoy uninterrupted quiet, be the sole tenants of some Renaissance palace at Vicenza or Ferrara, watch the lights and shadows on the Euganean hills from Este, and study Torcello before its restorations are completed. Five years hence few monuments will remain un-

scraped and unrestored; half the most exquisite treasures in Italy are losing their distinctive character, and the traveller will regret, when too late, that he spent his days in going to meets at the Due Torri, and his evenings in reading English magazines.

SOCIAL LADY-BIRDS.

THE position of a butterfly upon a pin may be attended with some discomfort, but it is a position which has its counterpart in modern life. Season follows season, and very little is done to better the condition of the human beings who are collected together night after night. Yet there might be some chance of improvement if proper encouragement were given to that class which, in order to compensate for some slight disadvantages under which it labours, advertises the enjoyment of a larger house or a better-arranged supper than is usually to be met with. Society, with its usual inability to recognise its benefactors, has most injudiciously at different times stigmatised them as *roturiers* and parvenus, wholly unaware of the advan-

tages it has derived, and is destined to derive, from them. In spite, however, of these mistaken appellations, their value is daily increasing, and there are a number of circumstances calculated to raise their position still higher. In the first place, they fill a vacancy. Every year more historical houses are shut up, and every year the number of dreary tenements increases about which it is impossible to predicate anything except that they possess back-staircases, and stand ostensibly in their own grounds. Some affinity they bear to country-houses, perhaps that of a mother-in-law. It is difficult indeed to avoid falling into the language of auctioneers in describing them. They are usually seen at the angles of the squares, and doubtless exist for the accommodation of the sparrows and cats that frequent them. Another point in their favour is that the supply of women under the age of twenty increases in geometrical proportion. Nothing exercises the smallest control over it, and unfortunately they all have the same tastes. If by a judicious process of selection among parents a race could be produced who disliked going out, and to whom

balls were odious, some change might be effected. Prejudices no longer exist, and Lord Chesterfield's view of the latitude to be allowed to the third sex, as he called ugly women, would be universally acquiesced in—"that they should be allowed to indulge in field sports, a cheerful glass, and to stand for Parliament." The only difficulty is to find women willing to admit their qualification. Not only is the present supply above the demand, but the difficulties are increased by a prevailing habit of bringing daughters out at the age of sixteen—a proceeding utterly subversive of all social progress. If the unhappy creature in question is invited to dine out, she very probably goes through an exhibition of nervous gymnastics, tearing her napkin, spilling her wine, convulsively clutching her necklace, and colouring at the sound of a monosyllable. It is just conceivable that her education may be improved in this manner, but the experiment should be made in the country, or at a *table d'hôte*, where there is a quick succession of travellers. The dissection of her mind indeed would be worth the attention of any physiologist; it is a compound of *Mangnall's*

Questions and *Frou Frou*, the occupation of the last and the diversion of the present year. She is full of dates and languages and undigested information, and when at her ease may often be seen trying to recollect the name of somebody who has been introduced to her. If even a compromise were effected, and she were permitted to appear at dessert, the public would be a considerable gainer, as well as her own digestion. If she is not shy, there is only an additional reason why she should be kept at home. Her appearance in the world has another sad consequence, inasmuch as it creates a demand for contemporaries of the opposite sex—the result of which is that a ball-room at Easter presents the strange spectacle of scores of human beings who are still growing. It is possible Mascarille was right in saying that "Les gens de qualité savent tout sans avoir rien appris." We see no other solution which accounts satisfactorily for their presence. This is a state of things which at once creates a new class, or at least renders its existence possible. With so admirable a field open to them, and the concurrence of so many advantages in their favour,

their success ought to be accomplished in the course of one season. We probably shall not hear any more sad stories of parvenants who have failed to become parvenus, and who by the example of their own shortened careers have deterred others from imitating them, a calamity which any well-regulated mind must earnestly deprecate. Every facility should be afforded to women who are anxious to open their houses; in fact, if no outlet is given, the Clubs will in all probability be seized, and the admission of the exoteric world no longer dignified by the mysterious name of a conversazione.

The first duty society has to perform in this matter is to discontinue its former offensive nomenclature, and give to the class in question the distinction of "arrivati." This little compliment will do much to soften the hardships they have had to bear, and will at the same time stimulate them to fresh exertions. The incipient hostess of this class has been forced to struggle for some years against the jealousy and illiberality of her neighbours, and the most mistaken views have prevailed with regard to her. Her desire to make acquaintances has been

characterised as vulgarity—a foolish word at most times, but especially so in the mouths of those who are likely to use it. Worse mortifications attended her first attempts at entertaining; a better ball was always given upon the night she had chosen as her own. Pseudo-royalty threw her over at the last moment, and the guests she most wished to secure used to write next morning to say that the evening was so wet, that they did not like to take their horses out. Her dinners were invariably failures, in spite of the care with which the guests had been selected. She gave as long a notice as if the object had been a charity, and the leases of half her guests' houses must have fallen in during the interval. In fact, until she changed her mode of procedure, she was somewhat unfortunate; her tableaux were as bad as her private theatricals, if not as productive of squabbles. All this is a matter of history, and her present sphere is confined to the ball-room, where she can fairly congratulate herself upon what she has done. It is very pleasant to see her now. She is no longer in the position of the blank leaf between the Old and New

Testaments, to borrow a simile from Sheridan. Her face lights up at the names of her guests, and many of them she appears to recognise with ease. Her advertisements are issued with greater skill; she appeals to past services, instead of having recourse to promises. It is no longer necessary to suggest during the fortnight preceding her ball that the cotillon presents will be supplied (to use the language of housemaids and auctioneers) "regardless of expense," or that there will be round tables at supper—a statement as judicious and apposite as would be the eulogy of a library because it contained a copy of Hume or of Johnson's Dictionary. The baits which are offered to the world are extremely curious; we have even heard of a large expenditure of gas being held out as an inducement—an appeal probably to more senses than one. Now, however, instead of talking of the people she has asked, she mentions the names of those to whom she has refused invitations. She is beginning to be natural, forsakes the Embassies and Legations, and introduces one or two friends to her husband. She sneers at the numerous accessions to the sisterhood, and is

inclined to believe that London society is getting too large. She has an antipathy to struggling men, with whom her early life was bound up, resents rudeness, and has a wish to revive Almack's. Artistically she has still something to learn, for she belongs to a class who, like lunatics, are attracted by bright colours. The well-known aphorism applies peculiarly to them; they have a great deal of taste, but it is all bad; they have not yet mastered the practical laws of decorative art; their carpets and papers suggest primeval nature. The drawing-room, however large it may be, has a *soupçon* of the parlour, of well-bound books and antimacassars. Great prices have been given for strange pictures, whose *raison d'être* was intended to be the decoration of a fourth-rate dentist's sitting-room, a situation where criticism is always tempered by fear. Artists and sculptors are here repaid for the contempt of the world, and designs as happy as those of our public monuments are to be seen on entering the house; while the intricacies of the group and the surprising folds of the marble form a second cloak-room, affording a shelter for opera-

hats, and showing that everything in art as well as in nature has its object. These faults, however, are but trivial, and on the other side may fairly be reckoned a love for flowers, a palate capable of distinguishing between Vouvray and Silléry, great social industry, and a belief that one of the uses to which money can be put is to spend it—a belief in complete antagonism to that of the historical house, which does not agree with Bacon's view of the analogy between money and manure. Other varieties of the sisterhood exist, but this is the only one which exercises any influence upon society. This is the special type which is becoming a power. It is true that wherever maternal instinct is strong, it may give rise to impetuous sallies, but indignation is quite out of place. A fourth unmarried daughter in good health, and with a wish to go out in the evening, is a great social problem. If the nineteenth century solves it, its time will not have passed in vain. Sociology as a practical science is still in its infancy, and from Bodin to Comte no immediate remedy has been suggested which deals approximately with this phenomenon.

If no allusion has been made to the correlative struggler, man, it is because his existence is too insignificant. He fulfils no special purpose, and no one feels any interest in his social advancement with the exception of himself. There is, however, one affinitive type which is interesting from the fact that it cannot be traced beyond the last decade—a development of Liberalism, strengthened by the Reform Bill of 1867. He is a "sound" politician, and represents his constituents in society. He has always just left the House of Commons, or is just going there; he comes into dinner very late, and impresses his hostess with the belief that something is going on for the good of the country. On the same principle he goes to balls about two o'clock, and assures his partners during the intervals between the figures that there is nothing going on in the House. If he is introduced to any one, he offers them a place in the gallery, from which they can hear the presentation of a petition or the asking of a question, and contrives at the same time to give the impression that there is only one member who can introduce strangers, and that he is that member.

He stops everybody whom he knows in the street to inquire what their opinion is of the state of the currency, and looks pained if the question is evaded. He goes into society, because he considers that a little relaxation unbends the mind, and when he is not discussing politics, he is apologising for being seen. If a few intolerant persons call him occasionally tiresome, he has, on the other hand, the satisfaction of hearing many worthy people say that he is a rising young man. He has an extreme contempt for the good-natured and harmless struggler who spends his time on landings or staircases, retrieving cloaks and third daughters and carriages—a variety which is too well known to need description, which delights in afternoon teas, and represents manhood at those mysteries. Like Gulliver, by the Brobdingnagian maids of honour, this struggler is treated "with no kind of ceremony," and is looked upon by old women as one of themselves. He has, however, the merit of performing definite services in return for the invitations he receives, and sometimes crowns a happy old age by arranging a marriage long despaired of. All have a certain

small individuality, even down to the drawing-room acrobat who is supposed to cause the amalgamation of a party, and who at least succeeds in preventing all conversation, while he sings songs which by some strange accident are termed comic.

The disappearance, however, of all these existences would leave no void—they could have no hope of being missed. The women, on the other hand, to whom we have referred, are on a wholly different footing. We have demonstrated that they are social necessities; as much so as junior Lords of the Treasury or vestrymen, and the only wonder is that they have not been called into being at an earlier period. This season they are appearing in quantities, like the lady-birds and yellow flies of last year. It is equally unnecessary to speculate as to the source from which they come to us. They leave their homes and counties to do us good, they supply a vacancy, raise the general standard, and deserve protection and gratitude. Their vanities are very harmless. If they lengthen their names without the direct interposition of Providence, they are the only persons affected by the change

If they send out their cards of invitation at first as recklessly as wine-merchants issue their circulars, and often with as little result, the evil is one which is remedied in the succeeding season. We have described the opportunities they enjoy. The age is a very material one, and it is painful to think that strawberries in the house of a Lady-bird can be preferred to a combination of Portugal grapes and sixteen quarterings. It is needless to dilate upon the advantages to be derived from them; anything must be welcomed which has such an obvious tendency to promote circulation and stimulate rivalry. There is no limit to the possible consequences. The sleeping palace may be awakened, and begin not only to "bang and buzz and clack," but to show its pictures, light its rooms, brush away its cobwebs, weed its courtyards and gravel walks, paint its *triste* face, and expel its cats. In fact a social El Dorado may be pictured, in which the number of men shall exceed that of the women, disgrace attach itself to an unmarried man of thirty, and the only sufferers by this social revolution be lecturers on women's rights. During, however, the possible interval

which may elapse before the establishment of such a state of things the field is open to these reformers, and they may be assured that their ascent, like the famous one,

> "è tale,
> Che sempre al cominciar di sotto è grave:
> E quant' uom più va su, e men fa male."

And many of the sisterhood are more than half way up.

THE INFANT'S PROGRESS.

DURING the month of June, when "life would be endurable but for its pleasures," and when among those pleasures dancing is supposed to hold the foremost rank, a ball becomes worthy of the closest attention. In order to know how sublime a spectacle it is, to enter fully into the excitement of the scene, to judge with how great a sagacity its operations are conducted, and to form an adequate conception of the advantages which must result from it, it must be regarded from several points of view. If the evening is a fine one, the centre of a square will be an excellent position to occupy for this purpose, or any other place may serve which is free from irrational interruption, and at the same time sufficiently remote to prevent the sound of the

music from reaching the observer. About half-past eleven he will be rewarded for his pains. Apparently in obedience to some preconcerted signal, a number of black and bright-coloured ants begin to wander about, continually crossing the room with much monotony and regularity, and always returning empty-handed. At other times more energetic movements are executed by them in close contiguity to one another. The intelligent naturalist would at once leap to the conclusion that the males were displaying these marvellous antics with the object of exciting the admiration and attracting the love of the females, who stood arrayed in feathers and ball-paint to reward the victors; and he would probably remain entranced until a late hour of the night, in the hope of seeing some interesting process of selection take place, and the decimation of the inferior and less hardy males. Were he, however, to enter the room, he would be likely to modify his views. He would find that civilisation has imposed a curious restraint upon the movements of the body, that a sedate and measured walk is as much as many of the males are wont to permit them-

selves, and that the country alone can furnish examples of those who, to use Montaigne's words, "cherchent à se recommander par des saults périlleux, et aultres mouvements étranges;" indeed, in many instances he would observe that the elder males held themselves wholly aloof from the exhibition, leaving the struggle in the hands of the younger. This painful anomaly has been commented upon before, and the hopes in which we indulged, that the cause might be ascribed to the undue protraction of the Christmas holidays, have been rudely dispelled. Whitsuntide cannot be put forward as an excuse, and yet infants over whose heads scarcely three lustres have passed may be seen endeavouring to fulfil many of the ordinary duties of life.

"It is pleasant to watch the stormy career of one of them at a ball from some safe retreat, which a projecting pillar may afford, or which the eminences of some portly dowager's back may protect. For a little time he hovers about the cloak-room, until a rapid succession of guests enables him to run the gauntlet past twelve footmen, who all point angrily in differ-

ent directions, and thereby unsettle his mind for the rest of the evening. He breathes more freely when he has bowed to his hostess, for vague misgivings will obtrude themselves that she is aware that his card of invitation only reached him that very evening, and he has strong fears lest at any moment he may be pounced upon and sent to bed. When once he has reached the ball-room he has plenty to do; he has two gloves, which nothing will induce either to button or to develop themselves, and as his hands increase week by week in size, this difficulty is continually present. He has also a large assortment of horticultural specimens, a yellow rose, some stephanotis, and a few carefully-chosen ferns, besides a proportionate amount of moss and wire. To keep this in its place requires the undivided attention of two pins, an elastic band, and the unhappy owner, who is constantly engaged in restoring it to its upright position. Till the room is tolerably full, he lurks in ambush; when, fired by the exhortations of his mother to dance, and responding to a latent hereditary instinct, he approaches in crab-like fashion an infant of the

opposite sex, when, if his advances are favourably received, he endeavours to thread his way to that part of the room where active exercise is taking place. For a long time they pause upon the brink, then make a few false starts, seize one another's hands, and embrace at intervals, only to relapse timidly into their former positions, while people emerge from behind them and disappear in the distance. At last a final effort is made, and rudderless and oarless they push off their little boat together; now they are borne along the stream, now tossed convulsively, now landed on a "dog's" foot, whose piteous yelp may be heard above the tumult, and now they are gliding safely down a back water. The male infant, pleased at finding that he has not lost a limb, suggests that they should go on again; so, maddened by the gods, they enter the current once more. They execute their playful kicks in the middle, are pushed consecutively to the right and to the left, beg promiscuous and universal pardons, and knock their little heads together in a manner which would be dangerous were their bones but matured. Nevertheless, disagreeable doubts begin

to suggest themselves; the male infant is not sure that his mother is right in wishing him to valse in London, while his partner is only conscious of carrying about fragmentary shreds and straggling pieces of what once was trimming; her mind is bent on pins, without which useful commodity she will speedily collapse into her natural shape. Thus, agreeing that it is too hot and too crowded to dance—a most rational conclusion had it been arrived at a little earlier—they plunge into a corridor.

But twenty minutes have changed the aspect of the rooms. They now contain as many varieties of animal life as the Zoological Gardens. Here, stopping up the doorway, are two groups of that interesting class which is the terror of ball givers, which comes up to town for three weeks in June, and announces in all the papers that it has come to such and such an hotel for the season. If they do not bring daughters to town, they possess at least sisters-in-law or nieces, or something which valses when given an opportunity, with "whom the horizon is clouded" directly a dance is likely to be given. They write notes for invitations at the last mo-

ment, imploring the hostess by the memory of a common descent to allow them to bring Mary as well as Susan, and adjuring her by her good nature to ask them to her second ball instead of to the first, as they have accepted an invitation to Ascot. Their energy is beyond admiration; they are always at an Exhibition; art and nature, as seen in the shape of the Academy and the two-headed Nightingale, thrive by their patronage; it is for them that the exquisite picture of the birth of this latter phenomenon is pasted on the walls, and it is to them that it appeals. They have been to the Tichborne case before luncheon, have looked through the 'Battle of Dorking,' driven three times round the Park, and eaten two ices during the afternoon, and they will remain interested spectators of the dancing until three o'clock in the morning. *Sua si bona nôrint!* They have left some old country-house at the most beautiful season of the year for dingy apartments on the second floor, and will return with the proud consciousness of having left two hundred cards; while the eldest daughter has been twice run away with by the most unmanageable brute in the neighbouring

stables, the only one not hired on her arrival in town, and in its quieter moments preferring a retrograde to a progressive motion. They do not even adhere to their original programme; it is a misfortune that they should come to town for three weeks, but it is a crime that they should stay six. For ten minutes they have opposed themselves to the waves of human beings who beat up against them, in the vain hope of finding space for their evolutions. Women who know nobody invariably remain wherever they are most in the way; some are conscious that the following year they must bring out two daughters, though their acquaintance with that interesting object, man, is strictly confined to two young friends of their husbands, both unhappily suffering from rheumatic gout. "What must I do to know men?" is a question which painfully recurs, each time incapable of solution. In the next cage is an ex-Cabinet Minister, limited by a merciful dispensation to mismanaging his own affairs, instead of those of the country; then a newly-made peer, bearing his honours with more self-possession than his wife, whose anxious face betrays her disappoint-

ment at not being told to go up higher. In the next recess are two county neighbours, both baronets, both discussing the Horse Show, yet both destined to pass away without having even introduced a new breed of sheep upon their property. Further on are two men, whose yearly income exceeds forty thousand pounds, complaining to one another about the price of hay, and their consequent inability to do many things which, were the times but better, they might have possibly afforded. This year they will only be able to put by ten thousand for their younger children, and invest fifteen thousand in land adjacent to their estates. By their side, fenced in with tulle and tarlatan, is a crétin, who is refusing an invitation to join a picnic to the Crystal Palace, with the thermometer probably at thirty-six. The little sense which he possesses leads him right upon this occasion, though his inability to express himself confines him to the simple utterance of the monosyllable No. If he did not drink he would be nearly presentable.

The room is very full; the host stands aghast at the number of his acquaintance, for his wife

had told him that she was going to ask "only a few people." Social statisticians have asserted that two-thirds of the invited guests may be expected to make their appearance at a ball, while only one-third is likely to come when the attraction of dancing is not held out. This, like many other bits of statistics, is probably untrue, but it expresses roughly the popular conception of the relative pleasure to be derived from a ball and from a party. On this occasion three-fourths must have come. Young married women more *bêtes* than fast, young married men very humble and careless about their personal appearance, girls who are beginning the second decade of their social life, with wants that increase as the chance of their being satisfied decreases; and impassive matrons, sitting peacefully on narrow seats, convinced by experience that, if they lose sight of their daughters for ten consecutive minutes, it is not because they have been hurried away in a T-cart, the victims of an impetuous Lovelace.

A surging mob of humanity is trying to dance the lancers, and the infants have tempted providence again. In order that their confusion

may be still more manifested, a genial dog insists that it should be a "sixteen lancers." Could a purgatory ever be supposed possible for this harmless creature, he would undoubtedly spend his nights in dancing the last figure of this perplexing exercise, ever out of time, and ever offering the wrong hand. The male infant has never spoken during the first four figures; the yellow rose shares his embarrassment and begins to droop. He has no *memoria technica* to help him; when he valses he counts aloud; now, however, nothing but the closest observation can save him; his ideas are beginning to desert him, and he is pushed by the dog into the middle as some kind of bewildering music commences. He remembers that there are two women in pink and one in blue who belong to his set, but the nondescript appearance of the fourth upsets all his calculations; he runs about aimlessly, is found advancing with four girls, now giving both his hands to the dog, now standing motionless upon a dress. The result is disastrous, and he emerges from this slough of despond with the loss of two choice ferns. Supper alone can restore animation and strength;

soup and cutlets, plovers' eggs and strawberries, rise before the infant's eyes; the female assents; so, diving into the passage as a happy opportunity presents itself, they struggle on from one room into another, where the waters are still, but running more deeply; past two politicians, who prove the truth of Ruskin's proposition that "man has become, on the whole, an ugly animal, and is not ashamed of his ugliness;" past two flirtations, one to end in marriage, the other, to quote Heine, in "Schlangen hervorgekrochen;" past a waiter who has been mistaken three times for the host, past the host, who has been mistaken six times for a waiter; past historical pictures and priceless Sèvres, until in the distance is seen the glitter of the supper-room. The infant's spirits have revived, the female has twittered "Oh, fancy!" three times, and is prepared to say it again with emphasis as soon as she is fed. Regardless of their doom the little victims play, till just as they are entering the room, they are seized, stopped, pushed, and begged to make way for the Grand Duchess of Pumpenheim, who is advancing in solemn state accompanied by the gnashing of teeth. The

hostess, mistaking the violent suppression of tears for hunger, assures the infants that they can go in after a few minutes; but their appetite is gone; the female wishes to go to her mother, and they retrace their steps, given over to Mrs Diffidence and Giant Despair. Poor infants! the yellow rose has lost its head, and the last remaining specimen of Adiantum has withered away.

Meanwhile morning has come, the Grand Duchess has finished her supper, and discovered that plovers' eggs are almost out of season; only ten complexions can be found willing to brave the light, which is feared by all save the dog, who stays to the end, and walks home along Piccadilly, happy in the thought that he has six garden parties during the ensuing fortnight, showing no signs of distress, and as fresh as the vegetables which are slowly wending their way towards Covent Garden.

WEDDINGS AND WEDDING PRESENTS.

It is a matter of unquestionable notoriety that all marriages are made in heaven, and it is equally certain that the beautiful descriptions of them which we read must be due to celestial Correspondents. Such choice of words, such felicity of arrangement, such grace of epithets, could not emanate from any inferior source, and the future historian will best gather from these chronicles the condition of the English language in our day, and the manners and customs of those who spoke it. We shall not perhaps be accused of unnecessary repetition if we call attention to the subject. The sun is shining, and peculiar interest is excited. The bridegroom is accompanied by his friend who is officiating as

groomsman, and who is qualified by frequent service for the efficient discharge of the multifarious duties which are attached to the position. At precisely thirteen minutes and a half past eleven they alight at the church, saluted by the acclamations of the crowd, the excitement of the bystanders, and the symphony of bells. When the door is opened, four-and-twenty perpetual curates and prebendaries, deans and archdeacons, begin to assist one another. The scene increases in interest until the climax is reached when the bride enters, leaning on somebody's arm, and supported by her bridesmaids supplied with jewellery by a neighbouring firm, which thus has the good fortune to secure eight advertisements of its goods. The religious ceremony is performed with peculiar solemnity, unbroken save by the fidgeting of the groomsman; the benediction is pronounced, and on repairing to the vestry the formalities of registration are gone through—a part of the ceremony which is often described in language worthy of Burke. After this the party repair again to a mansion or residence, where a sumptuous *déjeûner* is prepared, and numerous covers are laid

—a mysterious but interesting process. It is here that English oratory is displayed to its best advantage, and graceful tributes are paid on all sides, characterised by good taste, by brevity, and fluency. The peer forgets his pomposity, and the fact that nobody listens to him elsewhere; the groomsman feels that the lightest part of his duties has come, and all regret the close of his remarks. At precisely four minutes past two the bride and bridegroom take leave of their friends, and seek the seclusion of a country-seat.

Meantime the "friends" separate, and the Correspondent is enabled to furnish those advertisements which all read with interest, if not with excitement. The enumeration of the presents and of the names both of their eminent manufacturers and of their donors fills columns, and affords invaluable opportunities of fine writings. The "members of the domestic household," called sometimes by profane and illiterate people servants, contribute something difficult to carry, and impossible to pack. It is interesting to know that the flowers were not the production of nature, but were expressly supplied for the

occasion by the floral manufacturer; nor is the name of the pastrycook wanting who made the indigestible compound termed a "bride-cake." A few years more, and we shall be told the incomes of the guests, their ages, and the construction of the ladies' petticoats. It may be that publicity is thus ostentatiously given to the names who contribute toward the future *ménage* of the happy couple in order that the standard may be raised, and that the donor of a water-bottle may shrink from appearing in the same list with the donor of a diamond bracelet. That aim, however, has not yet been realised, and the list of objects is as varied and as free from all connection with each other as the words which make up a page of Johnson's Dictionary. The company is a medley one; sugar-basins and aneroids, an antique pair of bellows, the Zoological Gardens faithfully represented in ormolu, a musical-box, a sketch mounted as a fan, fifty travelling articles to make locomotion impossible, a basket of snowdrops, and nine addresses on vellum congratulating the bridegroom on the examples he has to imitate and on the wisdom of his choice,

quite unreadable from the magnificent flourishes with which the initial letters abound, and signed by the schoolmaster and schoolmistress in behalf of the scholars. Were the bride and bridegroom endowed with ostrich-like digestions they might find some use for these articles. As it is, they often prove the most unmitigated nuisance, a misery alike to him who gives and to him or her who receives. It occasionally happens that the announcement of an engagement, instead of recalling the fact that two people are perfectly certain of being happy for life, that the cares of this world are over for them, and that a beautiful account of their marriage will appear in the newspapers and enrich the literature of the country, only suggests the painful thought that a present must be given, and, in order to be given, must be bought. To explain the grounds for this impression would be impossible; a slight relationship exists between the victim and one or other of the engaged pair, and the persons about to marry are going to live in London, possibly in a large house; it may be that the intending giver received at some former period a perfectly useless and now blackened

object, too dirty to make its appearance again in the world of rubbish, and that he feels bound to reciprocate the attention. "Human nature," says a great authoress, "is so well disposed towards those who are in interesting situations that a young person who either marries or dies is sure of being kindly spoken of." Whatever may be the cause, the dilemma remains the same. Much mental agony is undergone, increasing as the interval before the marriage becomes shorter. Some prudent persons have a stock of objects always at hand, one of which they forward upon receipt of the intelligence, and thus they may have the good fortune to send the first of the fifteen inkstands which follow. She who hesitates is lost; now helplessly bemoaning her condition, now peering uneasily into shop-widows, and finding that everything costs seven pounds when she is prepared to spend only four. Her sense of her unfortunate position daily grows in intensity, and she may be next seen sitting in a shop with a choice selection in front of her, amongst which are a blotting-book covered with excrescences of brass like a portmanteau, a miniature

helmet, two shepherdesses of modern Meissen, a silver-gilt machine for brushing away crumbs after breakfasting in bed, a gentleman in ormolu looking into a windmill about the same size as himself and of the same material, both containing cavities in their insides for matches, the discovery of which would occupy a lifetime. What a choice is here! The biggest fool of her acquaintance has just ordered the silver-gilt machine, which costs thirty pounds, so she takes the windmill with a sigh of relief, and sends it as a little object to remind her friend of the happy hours they have spent together. Her friend sends in return a little note assuring her that she will always value it, reflecting that it is a just requital for the ormolu porcupine stuffed with pins which she had presented on a previous occasion. But the donor and the windmill are not destined to lose sight of one another just yet. It is bad enough to see the rubbish in a shop, but there is some excuse for the production of these costly and worthless trifles. What the dogs are in the East to the streets, the givers of modern wedding presents are to the trade—the scavengers of refuse; what is too dirty, too use-

less, too ugly for other purposes, they absorb; but it is too hard to be called upon to look at it again when exposed to view in the drawing-room of the unfortunate girl whose future life is to be spent, or supposed to be spent, in its contemplation. There are entertainments of divers kinds and degrees of dulness, but the entertainment which is given for the display of the objects we have described is without an equal. Neatly arranged upon the tables in symmetrical order lie these specimens of English taste, "several hundreds in number," slips of paper being attached to them recording the names of the givers. Here the lady and the windmill meet once more, regretfully perhaps, for some kind friend announces that she only gave two pounds for the candlesticks opposite; another has picked up something for thirty shillings which produces a sublime effect, and the name of the shop where similar objects can be procured is whispered in secret. There is a pleasing equality evinced in the display; Her Grace and the housemaid think the same thing "beautiful," and probably spend the same amount of money upon the object of their admiration.

The custom of giving wedding presents as it now exists is a social tax which, though paid by every one, is only paid grudgingly and on compulsion. It represents neither affection nor interest, and is not productive of the smallest profit to any save the tradesman whose wares are sold for the purpose. Its counterpart can only be found in the custom which existed a short time ago of giving leaving-books at Eton. The fashion was exactly analogous: little boys gave them to big boys, to whom they always had been, and to whom they continued in after life, complete strangers, subscribing themselves their "sincere friends on their leaving Eton." The head-master submitted to the custom at a smaller cost; wise in his generation, and being an elegant classic, he had published or privately printed a quarto edition of some Latin author which, it is needless to say, nobody ever wanted, and no one ever bought. This peculiarly useless volume was exchanged for the sum of ten pounds deposited in some corner of the room by the boy who was bidding good-bye, whence it was generally supposed that the head-master ultimately took it. This pleasant mode of

escaping the tax was unfortunately not open to those who paid for the leaving-books presented by their sons to their sincere friends, and who not unnaturally considered that the annual expenditure of fifteen or twenty pounds was hardly compensated by the possession of some scores of soiled copies bound in yellow calf. What these books are to the library, wedding presents are to the ordinary furniture of a house. What is to be done with the windmill? Should the first opportunity be seized for getting rid of it, there is the risk that its donor will tenderly inquire after it. It cannot be given away after the lapse of six months, for its colour is gone, and it looks as if it might have been present at Hilpah's wedding to Shalum. The poor thing eventually finds a shelter and a home in some spare bedroom of a country-house, where damp and dust hasten its decay. Sometimes it is destined to a harder fate. One swallow does not make a summer, and the gift of a wedding present does not insure the celebration of a marriage; the engagement may very possibly be broken off, and one of the consequences is the return of the windmill to its unhappy and original

possessor, whose feelings on its reappearance we forbear from commenting on. If the State would include wedding presents among the assessed taxes, and fix a definite sum to be paid at the beginning of each year, great relief would be experienced; the Government would of course realise a profit, and a large sum would still remain to be distributed as marriage portions. The present inequality would be remedied; for, as it is, those who never marry at all (and their number is daily increasing) receive no return for their original outlay; but on the institution of the tax this need no longer be the case. Single women, on attaining the age of forty-five, might, on condition of subscribing a declaration setting forth the extreme improbability of their marrying, and their aversion to that condition, receive the sum to which they would have been entitled on marriage. Widows, on the other hand, would get nothing under any circumstances, being exhorted to remain contented with the ormolu of the first marriage. During the interval before the adoption of this plan we have but one remedy to propose. Surely the old shoes which are now so lavishly

thrown away at the departure of the bride and bridegroom are capable of conversion into some valuable substance; which cannot be predicated of wedding presents. Let, therefore, the next "groomsman" set a bright example, and deserve well of society and the oppressed; as the carriage starts let a shower of aneroids, barometers, bellows, candlesticks, vases, mosaics, and antiques gracefully fall and flutter around it. Thus we feel sure that a "peculiar interest would be excited," while the struggles of the crowd to possess objects which to their inexperienced eyes might seem capable of being exchanged for a shilling would give additional animation to the scene. The prevalence of this custom might be expected to modify to some extent the present fashion, the chief compensation for which must be found in the advantages which result from a study of the pages of the 'Court Journal.'

THE END OF THE HOLIDAYS.

THE English lunatic may be expected in a very few days to return from the Continent, and the newspapers will doubtless chronicle his arrival in town on his way "to join the family circle" at the asylum in the country. If, however, the country loses quiet in one direction, it gains it in another. The local objects of interest will no longer be a prey to the tourists, who, fortunately for the preservation of archæological monuments, are obliged during a considerable portion of the year to work for their living. Sad nonsense is talked about trusting them, which is only possible as long as they are kept in sight. One well-known house has lately been closed to the public in consequence of the visitors having indulged in the pleasing practice of writing

facetiæ on the window panes. This is only one instance among many of similar character which we could quote. As year after year adds to the tribe of tramps, more restrictions will have to be placed upon sight-seeing. Let any one who doubts the necessity of doing so act for one day as custodian in some ruin, and note the manners and customs of the people who pass in and out. The first to arrive in the morning are three men, harmless enough, in flannel trousers and flannel shirt and flannel caps, evidently undergraduates. One has a "Murray," and in obedience to its directions they have come a mile out of the way to look at the ruins of what is described as having been a fine example of Early English architecture. They are in excellent condition, and present the appearance of having just left their baths; they look for the triforium in the crypt, for the crypt in the clerestory, but they have no time for an examination of details, as they have fifteen miles to walk before they arrive at the inn which will give them the luncheon they deserve; so, armed in their flannel panoply, they rush forward once more. The next party consists of five women

with baskets and parasols, who seize greedily upon the chapter-house as the most convenient spot for luncheon, and, before they look at the arches above them, eat and drink for fifty minutes without moving. When they have left the place, their late encampment is a horrible sight. What indeed is the good of being in a ruin if decency or tidiness is expected? Here some cold bacon is melting in the hot sun, crusts of bread and chicken bones are scattered about in all directions, greasy sandwich papers are fluttering round, a horror for ever, while jagged pieces of broken bottles render the place permanently dangerous. This is one consequence of their architectural studies, if indeed no worse result follows. The average male tramp may attempt to cut his name, but the female will often rush in where he fears to tread. In one respect she is mercifully at a disadvantage. Had Providence seen fit that women should carry knives in their pockets, the consequences would have been fearful to contemplate. Probably not one stone would be left upon another throughout the country. If, however, they have no knives, they have parasols, with which they

injure whatever they touch. The point of the parasol is another digit, with which they test the stability of everything that comes in their way. They dig up rare ferns with it, which they boldly assert are indigenous, and they loosen stones that are likely to fall. When they have finished luncheon, if there is a house attached to the ruins they insist upon seeing it, and if the housekeeper is not ready to receive them they will walk in of their own accord. It is not that the sight of newel staircases or Gothic mouldings "contributes to their mental health, power, or pleasure;" in fact, they rarely commit themselves to any expression of opinion beyond a supposition that "it" must be very old; but they are impelled by a jackdaw-like curiosity to peck about. Meantime they are playing with their parasols, justifying the discretion of the housekeeper who said, "I only let in four at a time, as I cannot keep my eye on more." They never go home until late in the evening, when they may be tracked to the next parish by means of their sandwich papers.

There is but a short interval between the exit of the tourist and the beginning of country-

house life; the lull, however, is delightful while it lasts. Its pleasures are chiefly negative; there is infinite satisfaction in knowing that this or that thing need not be done. The ordinary occupations have not yet begun; the county ball is not even thought of; the local lecturer is not yet advertised to appear at the Mechanics' Institute; the Corporation dinner is not yet announced, at which the mayor will congratulate the two burgh members, who in their turn will congratulate themselves, on work undone, on time misspent, on the obstruction of useful measures and the promotion of idle theories and vain undertakings, and will express their hope in broken English to the Corporation that another year may see the accomplishment of the same happy results by the same agency. Visits, too, need not be paid just yet; we may expect that the newly rich classes will do much to put an end to formal visiting, and as a large proportion of the castles, abbeys, and parks in any given county are in their hands, they are not unlikely to exercise considerable influence in the course of a few centuries. In the first place, when a visitor calls, he is always let in—

a circumstance in itself quite sufficient to check the habit of calling—in whatever part of the county the hostess may happen to be. The servant, who deserves impalement by way of encouragement to the others, insists on going miles to find his mistress, and through shrubberies and woods and walks will hunt her down. If, when found, she would only receive her guest, there would not be so much to complain of; but she goes up-stairs to "get ready" instead, leaving him waiting for twenty-five minutes in the drawing-room, which smells faintly of the new family pictures, and two illustrated editions of two modern poets. When she is ready and does come down, she talks about London, as if the chief charm of country life was not to get rid of the season; she talks of marriages between people she has never seen, and hints dubiously at an anecdote which was told of one of the Stuarts, and which has just reached her. She is very *retenue*, goes to Paris for her gowns, and in the performance of no single action can she be either simple or natural. She probably sleeps in a black velvet jacket. Her husband will stand for the county at the

next election, and will remind his acquaintance of the remark of a late cynic, who said, "When I see a particular fool I dont ask his name, but what county he represents." Not that he is altogether a fool, but that the necessity of judging everything by his own trade, and of appealing to it for information upon all points, renders him utterly incapable of taking a correct view of any political problem. Nevertheless he contributes to the stability of the Constitution. A large stone dragon, or griffin, or wyvern, "a most delicate monster," has just been carved on one side of his door, a faithful representation of the device his ancestors wore upon their helmets on going into battle, which excites the interest of the poor relation who "inquireth if he has had his arms done on vellum yet; and did not know, till lately, that such-and-such had been the crest of the family." The county magnate is still in Scotland, enjoying a respite from the labours which engrossed so many of his evenings during the Session, while his wife is engaged in anxiously considering how she can prevent her daughter from meeting the one penniless man with whom she

has been flirting at the last ten balls of the season. What is the good of building a new house, and a new ball-room, and weeding her acquaintance and inviting the residue to frequent entertainments, if the ideal son-in-law is not to be the reward? It is no good sending letters to him asking at what station the carriage should meet him, or hoping that he will not find "the house very dull, as there will be hardly anybody besides themselves;" for the ideal son-in-law is yachting for the rest of the year, and has given special directions that nothing is to be forwarded to him during his absence.

If human objects of interest have not yet returned to the country, there is abundant scope for study in the animal creation. The same difficulties present themselves in 1871 as in 1771, when Mr White was engaged in solving the problem whether owls and cuckoos kept to one note, or whether the former did not hoot in three different keys, as his neighbour, "who had a nice ear," remarked. Owls, indeed, are becoming rarer day by day. The detestable fashion of converting wild birds into screens and fans will extirpate them all. There is but

one remedy. If all travellers would only follow the example of Lord Walsingham, who, according to the newspapers, took two naturalists with him to the United States in the early part of this year, the race of stuffers of birds would shortly be extinct. Those deplorable objects which are called specimens would no longer exist, and a foreign bird might have some chance of life if he visited this country. As it is, if an angel by stress of weather, or through a broken wing, were driven to seek refuge on any one of our coasts, the whole population would probably sally forth, beat him to death with clubs, and forward the remains for the investigation of Mr Buckland, while the local press would rejoice over the achievement, and congratulate the public upon the possession of so valuable a specimen. The old race of true naturalists has almost died out. Charles Waterton, whose originality gave such a charm to the West Riding, was an ideal representative of the class. Who now "often mounts to the top of a lofty tree there to enjoy the surrounding scenery"? Who now "proves by frequent personal trial that the ripe berries of the yew

tree are certainly not deleterious"? or who now displays the trust evinced by the following passage? "Whilst engaged in the dissection of an old turkey-cock, lots of gallinaceous lice found their way on to my own body. I knew full well that they had got into a wrong box, and that they would not keep company with me for any length of time. So I let them have their own way, and I gave myself little or no trouble about them." Nor was such confidence misplaced, for "in less than four-and-twenty hours every louse of them had either dropped off or died." Trust, patience, and simplicity are the main characteristics of the true naturalist.

The student of the country during this season must be contented with small incidents. It is quite possible that he may not have even the excitement of an infectious illness to while away the time. He must learn to take an interest in domestic matters such as the confinement of a hedgehog in his kitchen, when, like Mr White, he may speculate upon the flexibility of the young spines at the time of birth, and conclude that the "poor dam would have but a bad time of it else in the critical moment

of parturition." If an episode of such peculiar interest has no attractions for him, he can study the habits of village life at the neighbouring school feast—one of the few forms of English hospitality which are above criticism. It is the greatest possible happiness of the greatest possible number, and shows to advantage all who are engaged in it. The butler, fortified by the example of his mistress, unbends, *quando ita majores voluerunt*, and allows those under his authority to unbend also. The wild curate may here be seen, good-natured and genial, getting in everybody's way, and indulging in one long continuous monologue. Once he was the hero of every three-volume novel; now he is nearly as rare as an owl, save in some few sequestered districts. Once he inspired universal confidence; now, when he gives out the text for his sermon (an abstract invariably of the first lesson), the whole congregation rushes to its Bible to verify the passage, and convict him, if possible, of a wilful misrepresentation. The valetudinarian may derive comfort from the sight of so much and so varied food producing neither dyspepsia nor

discomfort, and reflect with pleasure on the digestive powers of the rising generation; while even the cynic will gain something from the scene, for he will be enabled to appreciate Crabbe, and to read him with enjoyment.

DINNERS IN THE PROVINCES.

We are often told that the privileges of the landed interest are excessive, and that each succeeding year tends to exalt the position which it enjoys. The possession of acres gives its peculiar advantages. The country proprietor may look forward to seeing his name on the Commission of the Peace, and may dream of some day being mistaken for a General at a foreign Court when attired in the resplendent uniform of a Deputy-Lieutenant. In the Midland counties his tenants will take off their hats when they meet him. He may choose any known or unknown animal to represent the device his ancestors wore when setting out for the Crusades; and his wife can patronise the local bazaar, and may possibly be asked to the Yeo-

manry ball. This is the bright side of the picture, but, great and indubitable as are the advantages we have described, there are hideous responsibilities connected with the tenure of land, which the auctioneer takes no count of, and which sit behind both Lord and Deputy Lieutenants. When a man has "a stake in the country," whatever that may be, his opinions attain a certain importance, and he is expected to lose no opportunity of declaring them. This is the time of year when the opportunity occurs, and throughout the months of November and December innumerable banquets and dinners give birth to the beautiful speeches which are reported in the local newspapers. To speak—that is to say, to utter words belonging to the English language, and endeavour to apply them to a given subject—seems impossible in cold blood. Meat and alcohol are required to stimulate the nerves to the desired pitch, while the harmony of knives and spoons cheers the speaker as he shows what quaint combinations the English tongue is capable of. The object of the meeting has but little effect in determining the complexion of the entertainment. Everything re-

solves itself into eating and drinking. The birth of a child, the marriage of an heir, the presentation of a thing of ugliness to be a sorrow on some sideboard for ever, the success of an agricultural association, the formation of a Company to enlist the sympathies of the public on behalf of decayed and indigent mice to protect them against their natural enemies the cats, the desire to do honour to Mr Cobden, or the resignation of some one who has retired a few years after the loss of all his faculties has overtaken him—all these offer a curious similarity in the mode in which they are celebrated. Some day is fixed upon which a dinner is to take place in the neighbouring town, at a sufficiently remote period to cause the engagement to dwell as a nightmare upon the minds of the invited guests. When the day arrives it displays in a remarkable degree what inconveniences Englishmen are ready from a sense of duty or custom to submit to. The hour is probably an abnormal one, to enable some one to miss a late train; the chairman is probably unpunctual, and the guests flit about a cold and dismal ante-room; those who are dressed in evening clothes are

vaguely conscious of their peculiarity, while the frock-coated tribe of men are engaged in counting their numbers, hoping to lose their self-consciousness in a sense of their own preponderance. At intervals they cross the room, as if they had some purpose to fulfil, then hurriedly turn back, and subside nervously into a corner. All the professions are represented; there is the squireen who has driven seven miles in a dogcart, and shakes hands as if hands had no sensations. There are clergymen and doctors. Why the health of the medical profession is not drunk at these gatherings we do not know; perhaps that of the county members might be omitted for a few years to create a vacancy, during which interval they might devote themselves to the composition of a speech on the expiration of the Ballot in 1880. There are several reporters, though why they should take the trouble to leave their homes it is not easy to guess. What could be simpler than to write in peace in their own rooms that the Queen was a good Queen, that the Prince of Wales had been ill but was better again, and that no county sympathised more than that particular county; that the

bishop of the diocese was too well known to need commendation, and that the clergy were zealous in the performance of their duties; that the House of Lords was a valuable institution, which was evinced by the fact that Mr Roebuck had changed his mind on that subject, and that his pamphlet had never sold; that the House of Commons was a popular Assembly, and was the exponent of the will of the people; that the county and borough representatives were not indifferent to the interests of their constituencies; that the Mayor was a civic functionary; and that they themselves, the representatives of the press, were an important body of gentlemen. It would be very strange if this stereotyped summary were not sufficient to content the public.

When the food is cold the dinner begins. The room is a very cavern of the winds, and every seat has its own window open behind it. Men tumble into a wrong place to retain it, into a right place to vacate it. Pillars of Church and State group themselves near the chairman, mostly of middle age, for public dinners make men prematurely old, trying the mind as well

as the digestion. "You will find excellent bread, meat, and wine, provided you bring them with you," was the inscription on the wall of the Swedish inn, and it applies with equal force to the provincial dinner. Before the fish has been taken off the table the future speaker may be detected. His vacillating appetite, trembling hands, and wandering thoughts all point to one disturbing cause; his lips form vaguely a "Mr Chairman, my Lords and Gentlemen," after which all is a blank. Perhaps matters would improve if only his neighbour would keep quiet; but with ceaseless activity he gabbles throughout dinner, and confusion becomes worse confounded. Misguided mortal! he does not venture to write down his vagaries upon the piece of paper he has brought with him, and the only point that had occurred to him he has already forgotten. Joints follow entrées, and entremets joints; the time becomes shorter and shorter, and no god intervenes to postpone the dreaded ordeal, and shed darkness over the whole scene. He would willingly give up his stake in the country on the condition that he should never again be asked to propose the army and navy of England.

He has drunk his neighbour's wine from fright, and, when the cloth is taken away, he sees a troop of sisters, daughters, and wives rushing into the gallery. They have come to enjoy their rights, and see what a grand creature man is; how he shouts when he has nothing to say, how he mutters, how he stops, rubs his hands, twists his watch-chain, surveys his boots, appeals frantically to the chairman, begins it all over again like a boy saying his lesson, proceeds glibly into the middle of a quotation never to get to the end, mistakes noise for cheering, commits himself to a noun, a verb, and an epithet, and then finds he has achieved a combination which nothing in the English language will harmonise with; kind friends around each suggest a word; but as nonsense the sentence began, and as nonsense it must end. Labouring under the absurd impression that he has something to say, the speaker will not sit down, and manages to convey to every one else the feeling of exquisite pain from which he is himself suffering. It is indeed the audience which is to be sympathised with quite as much as the orator; other exhibitions of a cognate kind may

create amusement, but failure in public speaking is the death's head at the Egyptian banquet, reminding the guests that they are mortal. The unhappy senator who rises to return thanks for the House of Lords must deem it very hard that an enormous income and the obsequiousness of scores of neighbours are of no avail whatever in prompting the consecutive utterance of a few platitudes.

To make certain of the permanence of this branch of our Constitution, or at least to enhance its value, an easy plan might be adopted. Let one night be devoted unanimously by Government and the Opposition to the cultivation of their followers, four or five hours be given to the proposal of common toasts, such as Mr Bruce's force of character and Mr Ayrton's courtesy, and Mr Disraeli and Mr Bernal Osborne retained specially as teachers. Diplomas would thus in a very few years be given to several legislators to the effect that they were quite competent to return thanks for their health in the provinces, were able to gesticulate with grace, and to remember their names when on their legs. The public, mindful of the great gain likely to ensue,

would not insist upon publicity being given to the course of teaching, or upon being present itself during the performances we have suggested. We should not wish to deprive the county members of these advantages. Column after column is occupied by statements of theirs in which there is hardly ever a suggestion of any merit. The "cow and his labourer" is the subject round which their minds revolve, some of them apparently believing that this cry is the panacea of the age. If a labourer has a large and well-built cottage, a provident wife, a small family, the habit of accumulation, of judiciously investing his savings, and behaves with perfect propriety in all the relations of life, it is not unlikely that he may prosper. If, on the other hand, he marries at the age of twenty, has a family of ten children, is dirty, improvident, and drunken, the possession of all the stock of Chaucer's poor widow, with the same rights over the adjacent common, will not enable him to lead a creditable life. At present the position is an instructive one. The farmers wish to claim for improvements which they have never made, and to see their rents un-

alterable; the labourers to let two rooms to lodgers and occupy the third themselves, to be perfectly reckless and suffer no consequences, to shake off the feudal respect, but to retain the feudal advantages. The landlords, on the other hand, are desirous, if possible, of not spending more than a third of their incomes upon repairs, and would be only too glad to see their cottage property in the hands of small freeholders—property which, before the Ballot Act of this year, conferred some political power, but is now one of the heaviest of the taxes upon land. According to the nature of the dinner will be the character of the remarks. In one place the farmers will be congratulated upon the absence of an "agitator," the real cause probably being that the whole district has been under water for two months. The labourers will receive advice, flattery, threats, and good wishes alternately, and if nobody is any better for it, at any rate nobody is the worse. A few truisms are very effective, such as that if the labourer had more money and more leisure he would be better off, that no interest can stand alone, and that the question is

a difficult one and requires elucidation. In such a genial manner the dinner is protracted until ten o'clock, when about thirty speeches have been made, and the farmers separate crying with one accord, in the words of Tacitus, that the evening has been spent "pro dignitate rerum ad utilitatem temporum cum voluptate audientium." The Company has been formed, the anniversary celebrated, the testimonial presented, the resignation accepted, and nothing is left save many idle words vainly endeavouring to find some application.

We should like to know what effect the study of our institutions produces upon the intelligent foreigner. The Japanese Ambassadors have been conducted over everything that smokes, and everything that smells, and we see that they were present at a public dinner a few weeks ago. If only his Excellency Sioni Iwakura could be induced to confide his impressions to a modern Montesquieu or Goldsmith, the criticisms of a real Usbek would enlighten us. Of course we have no doubt about the nature of those criticisms, and believe that the first thing that the Embassy

will represent as necessary to the stability and happiness of the Japanese Empire is a centre of commercial industry. When class animosities have been judiciously stimulated, the atmosphere darkened, the rivers polluted, chronic noise produced and beauty banished, an emporium of trade will have been created, and the Embassy, when desired to name the channel which the recognition of their services shall take, will unanimously choose a public dinner.

THE END.

PRINTED BY WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS, EDINBURGH.

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Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018